

11. Fe.
A N
Impartial ENQUIRY
INTO THE
TRUE NATURE
OF THAT
F A I T H,

Which is required in the GOSPEL,
As necessary to
SALVATION.

In which is briefly shewn,
Upon how righteous Terms Unbelievers may
become true CHRISTIANS:

A N D
The Case of the DEISTS is reduced to a
short Issue.

By PHILALETHER CESTRIENSIS.

In ipsa fide sunt omnia opera quæ diligit Deus.

Augustinus Vol. 8. Pag. 44. Basil.

Ὅσα πῶς τὴν πίστιν ἔργον ἐκδέχεται.

Chrysostomus Serm. de Lege Naturæ Tom. 6.

P. 178 Parisiis 1636.—

L O N D O N:

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T O
The RIGHT HONOURABLE
P H I L I P,
EARL of CHESTERFIELD,
Lord-Lieutenant of *Ireland*.

My Lord,

THE Addressing this
Treatise to your
Excellency, I hum-
bly hope, calls for little
Apology. In it the Chris-
tian Religion appeals to the
Reason of Mankind; to all
Men of honest Hearts, and
clear, unprejudiced Under-
standings.

DEDICATION

standings. I find your Lordship, in the Account of all Men, at the Head of these: The Treatise, therefore, naturally inscribes itself to You.

That the God of Truth may lead us into all Truth, and direct us to our true Happiness here, and in that State which must last forever, is the earnest Prayer of

Your LORDSHIP's

most faithful,

most obedient,

humble Servant.

T H E
P R E F A C E.

I*T was, of Old, an Objection which the Heathen made to the Christian Religion, * that it insisted so much on Faith, and under the severest Penalties commanded Belief of its Doctrines. Belief they thought could not properly be the Subject of a Command†; and certain it is, that the Assent of the Mind, as such, is in no Man's Power; it dependeth not on any Man's Will, but on the*

* *Pagani nobis objicere solent, quod Religio nostra, quia quasi Rationibus deficit, in sola Credendi Persuasionem consistat.*

Ruffinus in Symbolum, Pag. 171. Parisiis 1580.

† *Jo. i. 3. 23. This is his Commandment, that we believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ.*

iv P R E F A C E.

Evidence that appeareth to the Understanding. Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned, Mark xvi. v. 16. Here Belief in the Gospel is, in the most express and solemn Manner, required in all, to whom it may be properly propos'd: And nothing, indeed, is more manifest in the Christian Dispensation, than what is there called Faith, is primarily and fundamentally required, in Order to any Person's having a Claim to the Benefits belonging to a Christian.

When the Keeper of the Prison of Philippi demanded of Paul and Silas, Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?

P R E F A C E. v

saved *? *They reply, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy House. The Question, which the Jailor asked, is the first that any Man, not yet converted to Christianity, most naturally desires to be informed in; and what Paul and Silas gave, for Answer, is the Reply that every Teacher of Christianity must make to a Question of the same Import.*

Suppose then a Person, not yet a Christian, should desire to know from a Teacher of Christianity, What are those Terms, upon which he may be admitted as a true Convert? The Answer must be, Belief or Faith in Jesus Christ. But here the Question naturally returns,

* Acts xvi. 30.

vi P R E F A C E.

and the unconverted Person makes a most reasonable Request, that the Christian Teacher will settle clearly, and particularly, the Meaning of those Terms, viz. What we are to understand by Belief? And what we are to understand by Belief in Jesus Christ?

Hence it is manifest, that, in order to remove or prevent Infidelity, the first fundamental Step must be, the Making it clear and plain, even to low and weak Understandings (because it is equally the great Concern of all) what that Faith or Believing is, which the Christian Religion requires in those who are to be admitted Members of its Society.

That

P R E F A C E. vii

That the Governor of the World (saith the unconverted Jew or Hea-then) should make all Things moral the Matter of his Laws; that he should enact even Things indifferent, and exact Obedience under the strictest Penalties, is reasonable and righteous; for these are Things in our Power, and consequently may well be expected from us. But I want to understand the Nature of the Believing that is required under the Penalty of Damnation, which doth not seem to be absolutely in our Power.

All will allow that our Reason, assisted by the Spirit of God, must distinguish false Religions from the true; and it is one Command of

viii P R E F A C E.

*Christianity, that * we prove all Things and hold fast that which is good, and that † we try the Spirits whether they be of God, ‡ and every Man is required to be ready to give a Reason of the Hope that is in him: Reason, therefore, is the Touchstone that must prove all Things and try the Spirits; and it is manifestly the Confounding of all Truth with Falshood to receive a Religion against, or without Reason.*

The Christian Religion was designed, in what is necessary to Salvation, not only for the Apprehensions of the Acute and Learned, but also for the Ignorant and Slow of

* 1 Theff. v. 21.

† 1 John iv. 1.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 15.

Under-

P R E F A C E. ix

Understanding; such I mean, who make the Bulk of Mankind, the Learned or Sagacious being very few in Proportion. The first Preachers of it were Fishermen, and it is declared (Matt. ii. 5.) that it was addressed even to the Poor of the World, those of low Condition and Education; that it was calculated for those of low Advantages and Abilities; and the wise Reason of this is obvious, (viz.) For, if it be easily understood, and if it appear reasonable to these, it will appear such to all. Christianity then, as to the Terms upon which Converts are to be received, and intitled to its Benefits, was certainly made obvious to the Understandings of all, and consequently to those of low Capacity.

As

x P R E F A C E.

As the Christian Dispensation hath manifestly put Things upon this most reasonable Footing, it ought to be the first and great Care of the Teachers of Christianity to lay this Foundation in this and no other Manner. If it be rightly laid, the Superstructure may rise easily and stand secure, founded on the Rock of reasonable Satisfaction given to the Minds of all, as to those Points that are necessary to Salvation. If it be not truly and rightly laid; if the Terms, upon which Converts are to be admitted and intitled to the Benefits of Christianity, are not plain, reasonable, and level to the Understandings of all, the Consequence is evident, Numbers of Men, to whom the Christian Religion is proposed, must be Infidels, or Hypo-

P R E F A C E xi

Hypocrites, or both. Now the Want of this Care, or the not sufficiently Attending to it (next to the Vices of Mankind) I think is evidently the great Source of Infidelity among us.

No Man can have an higher Esteem than I have for the many valuable Labours of all those who have set forth the Evidences of the Christian Religion with great Strength of Reason, Extensiveness of Knowledge, and Honesty of Heart.

*And in those Writings Men of Letters and Men of Leisure may easily find Conviction, that Jesus Christ was sent from God to instruct and to redeem Mankind. But
what*

xii P R E F A C E.

what will become of those Myriads of Mankind, to whom the Christian Religion is, or may be proposed, who have little Leisure or Turn to Letters?

As Numbers of them have few Advantages from Nature or Education, their Understandings must have many Doubts in the Affair of Religion, some of which it is not in their Power to get over. What will become of those?

Must they all have such a Persuasion of all Things contained in the Christian Dispensation, as excludes all Doubt and Scruple, or else incur the dreadful Penalty of Unbelievers, He that believeth not shall be damned? That all should

P R E F A C E. xiii

should be thus exactly informed, and that all should have this full Persuasion, is a Thing absolutely, in the Nature of Things, impossible, and therefore cannot be commanded by our gracious God. How then has the Christian Religion provided for those who make the Bulk of Mankind? What is the Nature, Degree, and Extent of that Faith which may be sufficient to intitle them to the Benefits of Christianity? What is that Degree of Faith, or Persuasion, required in the Gospel, which may denominate any Person a true Christian? Can a Man be accepted by his God, although he have Scruples in Relation to some Things contained in the Christian Revelation, and be ignorant of others? What secure Foundation has an honest well-meaning

xiv P R E F A C E.

meaning Man of low Capacity, and little Leisure to build upon, by which he may be secure that he is a true Christian, and not liable to the Punishment denounced against Unbelievers?

The Satisfying of many doubtful Minds, with regard to these important Questions, I have attempted in the following Sheets; and I trust, I have made it plain, that Jesus Christ hath required nothing of us, in order to our becoming Christians, but what every Man of an honest and good Heart, even of low Capacity and little Leisure, may easily understand, and ought to comply with, as manifestly reasonable and righteous: This is the Design of the following Essay.

It

P R E F A C E. xv

*It must be observed however, that the Terms, here to be settled, are the very lowest upon which any Person may be admitted to be a Christian; and that God will expect from every Man, in Proportion to the Opportunities and Advantages which he enjoys. That (in the Words of the Apostle) he * increase in the Knowledge of God; that he † grow in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that he ‡ go on to Perfection.*

It sufficiently appears that the Design of the following Sheets is good, of great Importance, and

* Col. i. 10.

† 2 Peter iii. 18.

‡ Heb. vi. 1.

funda-

xvi P R E F A C E.

fundamentally necessary. What can be more generally useful, than, in as short a Compass as may be consistent with Clearness, to set Christianity in that genuine Light, in which Jesus and his Apostles offered it to the Jews and Heathens for their Conversion? A large Work, for this Purpose, can never be generally useful to the Young and Unlearned.

A Volume, for the Use of all, is aimed at in this Attempt; reducing the Affair of Christianity to a short Issue, and laying the Whole before the Reader in as brief and easy a View, as could consist with any Strength or Clearness. True Religion is equally the great Concern of all reasonable Creatures; but how few are they who have Leisure, or will

P R E F A C E. xvii

*will allow themselves Time to profit
by a large Volume?*

How far the End proposed is answered by the following Essay, those who read it must judge.

The Doing of Good, and the Increasing the Number of true Christians, was the Author's great and ultimate End; and if, by God's Blessing, that may in any Degree be attained by his Endeavours, he will not be disappointed of what he wished above all earthly Things.

PREFACE

With this Preface I have the pleasure to present to the public the first volume of the

History of the County of Kent, from the earliest times to the present day. The work is divided into two parts, the first of which contains a general history of the county, and the second a particular history of each parish.

The first part of the work is divided into three books. The first book contains a general history of the county, from the earliest times to the present day. The second book contains a particular history of each parish, and the third book contains a particular history of each town and village. The second part of the work is divided into two books. The first book contains a particular history of each parish, and the second book contains a particular history of each town and village.

THE

T H E INTRODUCTION.

IN Order to have a proper View of the Matter before us, it will be necessary; in the first Place, to state the Nature of Faith in the General, and then to enquire into the Nature of that Faith, which the Christian Religion requires in those, to whom it is preached, and with its Evidences fairly proposed. When this is done, we shall be enabled to determine whether Christian Faith be consistent with, and reconcileable to the clear and plain Principles of unprejudiced Reason.

In Order to fix some Foundation of our future Enquiry, it may be convenient to lay down a few *Postulata*, Truths that are allow'd by all Mankind; of which

xx INTRODUCTION.

the First is, That God obliges no Man to any Thing that is impossible.

This is a Principle so evident, that it is not capable of Proof, as it hardly calls for any Explanation.

That God should require a Man to do what he has, in no Sort, the Power of doing, is a Contradiction to the Nature of Things, which is among those Actions, which the Deity cannot do. In a Word, it is Injustice, a Contradiction to the Nature of God, as well as to the Nature of the Things which he hath made.

II. The Second is this: It is impossible that any Man can force the Assent of his own Mind. His Opinions, his Belief, his Persuasion concerning the Truth of any Point, must be proportioned to the Evidence which he sees, or thinks he sees. This also is a Principle universally allowed. A Man has no Power to alter the Nature of those Things that are the Objects of his Understanding, nor can he
change

INTRODUCTION. xxi

change the Nature of his own Mind. As it is with the external Eye, so it is with the Understanding ; it must see Things as they present themselves, and no otherwise. As a Man cannot see outward Objects, larger or smaller, more or less in Number, or of another Figure than as they offer themselves to the Eye; so it is with the internal Eye of the Mind, it has no Power to model the Nature of the Things that are the Objects of its Contemplation. When a Man hath sufficiently considered them, it is absolutely impossible he should think of them otherwise than as they appear to him to be. He may mistake, he may have wrong Notions of Things, and make wrong Inferences from real Truths; but it is impossible that he should think those Things to be true, which appear to him to be false, or those to agree, which appear to his Mind to disagree.

So also, if a Point is to be proved to him, it is notorious from the Nature of Things, and the Experience of every one

xxii INTRODUCTION.

who reflects, that he cannot possibly think that to be certain, which appears to him not to be probable; or that to be probable, which appears to him to be incredible. He may play the Hypocrite, and pretend to be persuaded of the Truth of Doctrines, which in his Heart he thinks to be Falshoods, and to believe Facts, which he really looks upon as groundless. But this will not alter the inward Persuasion of his Mind; that will ever be proportioned to the Evidence which he sees, or thinks he sees.

III. The Third is, that God will deal with every Man according to the Advantages and Opportunities which he hath enjoy'd. This is connected with the first Principle which we laid down: For, as no Man can be obliged to what is impossible; so whatsoever is in his Power will be expected from him. A Man's Power must ever, of Necessity, be exactly proportion'd to the Advantages and Opportunities he hath had.

By

xxiii *INTRODUCTION.*

By Advantages we are to understand all Faculties and Powers of Understanding, which every Man hath from Nature, with the several Degrees of Strength and Sagacity that are given to them: 'As, by Opportunities, is meant all Means necessary to, and Helps convenient for Instruction, and Information, and the Improvement of his Mind, in all Respects whatsoever. A Man's Power must ever be made up of these Advantages and Opportunities; whatsoever may reasonably be expected from them will be allowed to be in his Power; and that, which is fairly in his Power, will certainly be required of him. God therefore will judge of, and deal with, every Man according to the Advantages and Opportunities which he hath enjoy'd.

THE
CONTENTS.

SECT. I.

*OF the Nature of Faith, or Belief, in
the general.* Page 1.

SECT. II.

*Shewing how much, and how readily, all
Men act, in the most important Affairs
of this World, upon Faith, or upon
Grounds less certain.* P. 13.

SECT. III.

*Of the true Nature of the Christian
Faith.* P. 30.

SECT IV.

*In which the Nature of Christian Faith
is more fully explained, by examining the
Properties of Abraham's Faith, which
Christians are bound to imitate. The
first Property attributed to Abraham's
Faith*

xxvi CONTENTS.

Faith is considered; viz. That it was grounded on Reason. P. 49.

SECT. V.

In which the second Property of Abraham's Faith is consider'd; viz. The Righteousness of his Faith. P. 69.

SECT. VI.

In which the third Property of Abraham's Faith is consider'd; viz. That it was a full Persuasion of his Mind. P. 88.

SECT. VII.

In which the fourth Property of Abraham's Faith is consider'd; viz. That he gave Glory to God. P. 101.

SECT. VIII.

Shews in what Sense the Practice of Virtue is necessary to the Producing of Faith in Christ Jesus. P. 124.

SECT. IX.

Shewing that no Man can attain to true Christian Faith, without the Assistance of the divine Spirit influencing his Soul.

P. 138.

SECT.

CONTENTS. xxvii

SECT. X.

*Concerning the due Submission of Reason,
with regard to the Mysteries of Religion:
In which the Nature of a Christian My-
stery is explained.* P. 149.

SECT. XI.

*In which the Influence and Efficacy of divine
Faith is consider'd.* P. 163.

SECT. XII.

*Containing a summary Account of the Evi-
dences which prove that Jesus was the
Messiah, sent from God to instruct and to
redeem Mankind. In which is shewn, that
there was in the Jewish Scriptures a
Promise made to Mankind, and from thence
an Expectation of an extraordinary Per-
son sent from God, at a particular Time.*
P. 169.

SECT. XIII.

*Shewing that, as Jesus declared himself to
be this extraordinary Person, so he gave
the fullest and strongest Proofs that could
be desired, that he was the promised Mes-
siah. In which the Evidence is examin-
ed.*

xxviii CONTENTS.

ed, which ariseth from his fulfilling the other Prophecies, which foretold the Messiah. P. 177.

SECT. XIV.

In which the Evidence is examin'd, that ariseth from the Miracles which Jesus wrought : Shewing that the first Condition, that should attend all Miracles, took Place in those wrought by Jesus, viz. That they should be so repeated, so publick, and so evident to Numbers, as to leave no Doubt. P. 184.

SECT. XV.

Shewing that the moral Doctrines, which Jesus taught, all manifestly tend to promote the Happiness of Mankind, and the Glory of God. In which they are compared with those taught by the Heathens. P. 193.

SECT. XVI.

In which it is examined, Whether the peculiar Doctrines of Christianity be worthy of God ; and whether they tend to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind ? P. 209.

SECT.

C O N T E N T S. xxix

S E C T. XVII.

*In which is examined the Evidence that
ariseeth from the Fulfilling of Prophecies
foretold by Jesus.* P. 223.

S E C T. XVIII.

*The fifth Proof, that Jesus was a Teacher
sent from God, viz. his Rising from the
Dead.* P. 227.

S E C T. XIX.

*In which the Nature of the Evidence which
we have for the Resurrection is examin'd,
and the Objections to it, as witnessed by
the Apostles, are answer'd.* P. 237.

S E C T. XX.

*In which the Case of the Unbelievers of these
Days is compared with that of the Jews,
who saw the Miracles of Jesus; shewing
that we have several Proofs and Advan-
tages which the Jews wanted; and that
(upon the Whole) they, who now reject
the Christian Religion, would reject it,
though the same Evidence, which the Jews
had, were offered to them.* P. 268.

S E C T.

XXX CONTENTS.

SECT. XXI.

*Containing a short State of the Deists Case;
being the Result of the former Sections.*

P. 298.

SECT. XXII.

*That no Man can have true Christian Faith,
without Freedom in Thought and Action;
and that true Free-thinking and true
Christian Faith, as it is the Act of the
Mind, are evidently one and the same
Thing.*

P. 310.

SECT. XXIII.

*Shewing that Infidelity took its Rise from
Rome, and hath been propagated from
thence to us; and that our Deists, how-
ever contrary to their Intentions, carry
on and greatly forward the Interests and
Designs of Popery.*

P. 326.

AN

Impartial ENQUIRY, &c.

S E C T. I.

*Of the Nature of Faith, or Belief, in the
general.*

HA V I N G laid down these few Truths, which may help to regulate our future Enquiry, let us consider what is the true Nature of Faith, or Belief, in the general.

Belief, in the general, is that reasonable Persuasion of the Mind, concerning the Credibility of any Proposition, which is sufficient to engage a Man to order his Conduct suitably to such a Persuasion. It must be a reasonable Persuasion; for, if it be without, or against Reason, it may be Whim, or groundless Delusion, or Madness, but it can never be called Faith,

or Belief; it being a Contradiction to common Sense, to say a Man really believes a Thing, when he hath no Reason for his Believing it.

This Persuasion of the Mind is employed about Things credible. Here we must observe, that there are various Sorts of the Mind's Persuasion, proportioned to the several Sorts of Evidence on which it is grounded.

We are persuaded of the Truth of Things, either because they are evident to our Senses, and such Persuasion is called sensitive Knowledge, which we have of the Existence and Properties of all corporeal Beings; or they are evident to our Understandings from the Nature of Things, either immediately in self-evident Truths, or mediately in those that are evidently connected with, or deduced from Truths that are self-evident: Or, lastly, we are persuaded of the Truth of Things, which we know neither by our outward Senses, nor by our Understandings from the Nature of Things, but because they are affirmed by those who know them to be

be true, on whose Knowledge and Integrity we think we have Reason to rely. These Things, thus proposed, are called *credible*; and the Persuasion arising from this Sort of Evidence is called *Belief*.

The Ground therefore, whereon *Belief* is fixed, is *Testimony*: When we rely on the *Testimony* of *Men*, it is called *human Faith*; and when we rely on the *Testimony* of *God*, it is called *divine Faith*.

Now, tho' it must be acknowledged, that the Persuasion of the Mind, grounded upon *Testimony*, not at present confirmed by Miracles, cannot be equal in Degree to that grounded on the Evidence of our own Senses, or the Evidence of Axioms, or that of Truths evidently connected with them, yet shall we, upon impartial Enquiry, find, that it has Evidence abundantly sufficient, in the Eye of Reason, to determine Men's Conduct. We shall find, that as Men have, through the whole Course of their most important temporal Affairs, sufficient Ground in *human Testimony* whereon to proceed; so shall we find, with Regard to the most

important Affairs of the other World, that the Christian Religion has abundant Evidence to determine every Man, that will properly consider it, to order his Life agreeably to its Laws. This was the last essential Part of our Description of the true Notion of Belief in the general, namely, *That it may engage a Man to act agreeably to his Persuasion*; and it will be found to be of great Importance towards the settling several Points of no small Difficulty, and of great Moment.

Some Enthusiasts, to magnify the Evidence of divine Faith, have maintained it to be clearer and stronger than that of sensitive or demonstrative Knowledge; and others, of better Learning, have taught that divine Faith necessarily excludes all Doubt. Now both those Doctrines have a most pernicious Tendency to subvert all Knowledge, and the very Faith they think to establish upon them; for they confound the true Nature and just Limits of all Evidence, and consequently of all Knowledge which depends on that Evidence.

That

That the Evidence of divine Faith excludes all Doubt, is a Doctrine the less extravagant of the two : But even that has been the Occasion of distracting Scruples in the Minds of many well-meaning Christians, and has drove Numbers, not so well disposed, into abandoned Infidelity.

For, when Men are taught that the Faith, which the Christian Religion requires in its Disciples, is such as excludes all Doubt ; and when honest Minds find that, in their Enquiries into the Christian Religion, Doubts occur, which they know not how to get over, they conclude that they are not true Believers in Christ, and that they are under the dreadful Doom of Unbelievers, pronounced by that Sentence which we read, (*Mark xvi. 16.*) *He that believeth not shall be damned.*

The Consequence of this is, that Anxiety and Distraction of Mind which arises from the Dread of infinite Evils, which they see not how they can avoid.

Thus the Life and Death of some well-disposed Christians has been render'd mi-

ferable : They live in Uneasiness, and die in Horror.

On the other Hand, Men of Pleasure, who are inclined, or resolved to live in Vice, being enough disposed to condemn Christ's Religion, as they find it condemn them and their favourite Vices ; when they are told, that it peremptorily requires in all Christians a Faith that excludes all Doubt, a Faith which its Evidence cannot necessarily produce in all Men, and consequently to some Men must be impossible, they immediately lay hold of this Handle against it, and renounce it at once, as an absurd and an unrighteous Scheme, that cannot have God for its Author.

In Opposition to these Doctrines we maintain, that in the Case, both of human and divine Faith, a Man will ever be allowed, both by God and Men, truly to believe any Point which he professes to believe, provided he orders his Conduct agreeably to such Belief. Thus, for Example, in the Affairs of the World, grounded on human Testimony, that Man
will

will certainly be allowed to believe that there is such a Country as *Brasil*, and that he thinks it is a more healthy and happy Climate than his own, if, professing to believe this, whatever Doubts he may have about it, he sells all his Substance in his own Country, and transports it to those Regions which he never saw.

So also, in the great Affair of Religion, that Person will certainly be allowed, both by God and Man, to believe a future State of Rewards and Punishments, if, professing this Belief, he orders all his Actions suitably to such a Persuasion, and as a Man ought to do, who expects soon to have his Lot assigned him in that never-changing State of Happiness or Misery.

Next to *Belief*, or *Faith*, comes *Opinion*, a lower Degree of Persuasion; on which, however, Mankind do, and must proceed, as on Belief, in all their important worldly Affairs that are future, or not present to their Senses.

As *Belief* is employed about Things *credible*, *Opinion* is conversant about Things *probable*. What clearly distinguisheth *Faith* from *Opinion* is, that the *Ground of Faith is Testimony*, and the *Ground of Opinion is the Nature of Things*, in which we have no Certainty, but more Arguments or Proofs to think them true than otherwise; and, in Proportion as these Proofs are many and strong, the Probability is greater, and our Opinion stronger.

Opinion therefore seldom, if ever, excludes all Doubt; whereas *Faith*, where the Witnesses are many, and good, and disinterested, sometimes leaves no Room for Scruple. Thus, if all *Englishmen* bear-witness that it froze in the Year One Thousand seven Hundred and Thirty-nine for near two Months, a Foreigner would as little doubt of it as that Four and Four make Eight.

Here it is worth Observing, that, as we shall shew that Men, in all their important worldly Affairs, proceed readily and

and chearfully upon Probabilities, so it is plain that the sincere Christian goes upon much better Grounds, as to his Belief in Christ, *viz.* the Testimony of many and excellent Witnesses, giving Evidence to Matters of Fact which they affirmed to have happened ; the Consequence of which will be plain, *viz.* that the Christian, in his most important eternal Affairs (that is) in Matters of Faith, will be found to go on much better Grounds than we generally proceed upon in our most important worldly Affairs.

Some Men*, and those for the most Part very accurate, have confounded Credibility with Probability, Belief with Opinion. This, for many Reasons, must be inconvenient, and is not well-grounded in the Nature of Things : For, as Testimony regards Matters of Fact (where

* Mr. Lock, B. ii. Ch. 15. of *Probability*.

“ The Entertainment which the Mind giveth
“ to probable Propositions, is called Belief or Opin-
“ ion.”

the Witnesses are good, and many) the Belief, or Persuasion of the Mind arising in such Cases, must be ordinarily much higher and stronger than in Opinion, employed about Things probable, which, as they are properly Things future or removed from our Senses, Conjectures or Guesses concerning them can never justly produce such Confidence, as good Witnesses concerning Matters of Fact commonly do.

Thus, tho' it be in the highest Degree probable that it will freeze in *England* next Winter, yet we cannot be as confident of it, as we are, by proper Testimony, that it did freeze last Winter.

That Credibility is, beyond all Controversy, a better and more satisfactory Ground than Probability, in any important Affair, seems to be the common Sense of all Mankind. This appears in the Method that takes Place in all their Courts of Justice, where the important Affairs of their Liberties, their Properties,

Properties, and their Lives are tried and determined. In all these nice Affairs, the Judge and Jury go upon the Testimony of Witnesses, (that is) upon Credibility, and the Conviction of their Minds is nothing else but Belief, or Faith.

Thus, in all Courts of Justice, Faith, in credible Witnesses, is allowed to give fully sufficient Grounds whereon to determine all our nearest and dearest Concerns in this World; whilst, at the same Time, they have so low an Opinion of Probability, that a Judge can hardly bear to hear a probable Argument, unless they be what they call violent Presumptions in the highest Degree probable.

This shews us in a strong Light the great Difference there is between Credibility and Probability: And it deserves our particular Attention, that the Grounds of the Truth of the Christian Religion is the Testimony of Witnesses in the highest Degree credible; by which Sort of
Evidence

Evidence Judges and Juries every Day
determine all our nearest and dearest
Concerns of this World, of Liberty, Pro-
perty, and of Life itself.

SECT.

S E C T. II.

Shewing how much, and how readily all Men act, in the most important Affairs of this World, upon Faith, or upon Grounds less certain.

HA V I N G set forth the true Nature of what is called Faith in general, we should proceed to enquire into the Nature of that Faith which the Christian Religion requires in those, to whom, with its Evidences, it is proposed. But it seems necessary first to shew, in a few Words, how much Mankind are, and, from the Nature of Things, necessarily must be, directed by Opinion, or by Faith, in their most important worldly Affairs: How fully they rely upon these Grounds, and how constantly they act agreeably to them, in their most weighty temporal Concerns.

The Things of this World, about which our Thoughts and Actions are chiefly employed

ployed, are either of a publick Nature, regarding a whole Nation, or they are private, respecting every particular Man's Concerns. Those which are private relate to our Bodies, our Minds, or our Fortunes, and in all these Particulars, for the most Part, we are directed by Faith only ; that is, such a Persuasion of the Truth of what we go upon, as effectually determines us to act agreeably to such Persuasion.

It is inseparable from the Nature of all human Affairs, that are not immediately present to our Senses, that we cannot have demonstrative or sensitive Evidence concerning them, and consequently we cannot have Certainty about them.

Thus, to descend to Particulars : In Relation to the publick Affairs of any Nation, all the most important Concerns of War and Peace, and Trade, what Ground hath the most sagacious Mortal to go upon in his conducting of them ? Hath he any absolute Certainty ? Nothing like it. After the most careful and painful Enquiries, the most mature Deliberations,

tions, and the best concerted Schemes, he hath nothing but the Credibility of the Grounds he goes upon, or strong Probability of Success. What he proceedeth upon is only such a credible or probable Persuasion of his Mind as determines him to act agreeably to such Persuasion, and that is nothing but Belief or Opinion.

This is the Case of all the Warriors of the Earth : Can the Numbers of their Soldiers, the Exactness of their Discipline, the Courage of their Hearts, or the Subtlety of their Schemes, give them Certainty of Conquest, or ensure them Victory ? No ! The most consummate General that ever lived, in the best concerted Scheme he ever executed, had no better Ground to go upon than Credibility, or Probability, Belief, or Opinion. The most exquisite human Sagacity, that ever arrived at the highest Pitch of military Glory, could do no more than chuse those Measures which gave the best Hopes of Success, and execute them with the greatest Care and Resolution.

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Thus also it is with Regard to Trade, the Management of our Bodies and our Substance. Has all the mighty Affair of Commerce thro' the World any other Foundation than Faith or Opinion?

Doth the Merchant go upon any Thing better than Credibility or Probability? Doth he not, for the uncertain Hope of bettering his Condition in this uncertain World, constantly put his most valuable worldly Substance to the Hazards of the Winds and the Seas, and the frail Fidelity of Men? Doth he not often venture himself, his Life, and all that is dear to him here, upon the distant Prospects of bettering his Circumstances? And hath he, in these his Affairs, any Grounds that exclude all Doubts of Success? No: All he can possibly do, is, in every Step, to take the most prudent (that is) the most credible or probable Measures. But, when all is done that the most exquisite Prudence is capable of, *the Lot is cast into the Lap, but the whole Disposal of it is from the Lord.*

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And is it ever made an Objection, by any Man engaged in this Way of Life, against Proceeding upon what is credible or probable, that the Grounds he has to go upon do not exclude all Doubt?

Would not a Merchant be pronounced to be without common Sense, or to be turned in his Head, who should refuse to send his Ship to Sea, till he gets such Certainty of her returning with Profit as may exclude all Doubt and Scruple? And in the very same Manner doth all the World act, with Regard to their Bodies and their worldly Substance. Do we go upon Certainty when we go to Law? Do Men stay till they have no Doubt or Scruple about their Title, or their Success, before they will defend or assert their Rights? Doth not every Man think that, in such Affairs, strong and probable Hopes, and Belief that his Claim is good, and that he shall have Success, is the most sufficient Grounds to proceed upon*.

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* The Conduct of our Lives, and the Management of our great Concerns, will not bear Delay ;
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Do we stay for Demonstration before we take Physick? When our Health and Life are at Stake, don't we think ourselves happy in the probable Advice of an ingenious and skilful Man? And what is our Ground of Comfort in such Cases? Is it any more than the probable Hopes that his Prescriptions may, in all Likelihood, be the Saving of our Lives? Do we reject such Advice 'till all Scruple about the Grounds upon which the Physician proceeds be satisfied and removed? Would not a Man that should act in this Manner be pronounced mad, or a Fool?

In a Word, we plainly see that in our most important Affairs of every Sort, whether publick or private, national or domestick, we have Nothing of Certainty, that excludes all Doubt, in Matters that are future or at a Distance from us.

for those depend for the most Part on the Determination of our Judgment, in Points wherein we are not capable of certain and demonstrative Knowledge, and wherein it is necessary for us to embrace the one Side or the other.

Mr. Lock on Human Underst. B. iv. Ch. 16.

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The fairest Credibility or Probability, that offers in every Case, is thought to be the only true Ground for the highest human Wisdom to proceed upon; and the Man, who refuses to act agreeably to such Credibility or Probability, will be pronounced by all Mankind to be turn'd in his Head, or to be without common Sense. If, even in Things of this World that are future, or removed from our Senses, God hath for the most Part given us no more than Opinion, or Belief, to proceed upon in our most important worldly Affairs, how can we, with any Colour of Reason, look for more or better Ground than Belief, or Credibility, to proceed upon in relation to the Things of the other World? If we stand on as good a Footing with Regard to the Things of eternal Concern, have we not great Reason to be content?

We don't complain in one Case; we go on chearfully, and eagerly pursue the uncertain momentary Things of this World on the Ground of Opinion, or Probability: Why should we complain

of wanting Ground ; why should we be so cool and backward in our Pursuits of the Things of the other World, that are of infinite and inestimable Value, on the Ground of Credibility ? Can any Man assign any Thing like a Reason, why we should act upon Probability so readily in all the Affairs of this World, and not act agreeably to Credibility in what concerns the next ? The whole World may be challenged to shew, why a Man must be mad, if he refuses to act upon Probabilities in one Case ; and why he must not also be more mad, if he refuses to act upon Credibility in the other.

There is indeed this Difference between the two Cases, *viz.* that there is manifestly more Reason why we should more readily act upon Things credible in the Concerns of the next World, than upon Probability in the Affairs of this.

For, first, it is an allowed Maxim, that, in Proportion as the Advantages we aim at are great and valuable, we may reasonably risque the more for the Obtaining of them, that is, we may act upon the less Probabilities.

Probabilities. As, therefore, the Advantages of a happy Eternity are infinitely greater than those of our short and uncertain Life here, the Consequence is plain, that, for the Hope of Obtaining them, we should in Reason venture the more, that is, we should act upon less Credibility, if there were Occasion for it. Not indeed that the Credibility in one Case is not better Ground than Probability in the other.

We only suggest, that, if there were less Credibility concerning the Things of the next World, yet, upon the Principles of Reason, we ought to act readily upon it, and agreeably to it, on Account of the infinite Worth of the Things we aim at.

Another Reason why we should, in the Affairs relating to the next World, act upon less Credibility (if there were Occasion for it) than we go upon in the Affairs of this, arises evidently from hence; *viz.* If we refuse to act upon Probabilities in the Things of this World, and lose our Opportunities, the Damage is temporal, and may possibly be repaired,

or at worst cannot affect us longer than this Life lasts. But, in Relation to the Things of the next World, if we refuse to act upon the Credibility that offers, and lose our Opportunities, the Damage we may suffer may be eternal, the Loss may be infinite and irreparable, and affect us thro' endless Ages.

Another Reason to the same Purpose is this: In the Affairs of this World we often suffer great Damage, acting, as we necessarily must, upon Probabilities, that are frequently not attended with that Success which we hoped from them; and Thousands lose their Substance, their Health and their Lives, by those very Means by which they hoped to better their Condition,

But this is far from being the Case of our aiming at the Things of the next World: For, though Christianity should be without Ground, the worst that can befall the true Christian is to suffer nothing, to feel no Damage: He dies like every other Mortal, and the greatest Evil that can befall him is to sleep for ever,
without

without Sense of Good or Evil, Pleasure or Pain.

Now in a Case in which a Man may be infinitely a Gainer, and cannot lose, or suffer Damage, he is bound, by the Laws of Reason, more readily to act upon Credibility than in the Affairs of this World, where his Gains, even at the best, can't be well called very great or or lasting, and where he ventures much of what he has, and may suffer the Loss of Substance, and even of Life itself. And this, by the Way (as *Plato* represents it in his *Phædon*) is much the same Reasoning which *Socrates* used upon the Immortality of the Soul, just before his Death: " If, (saith he) * my Soul be
" immortal, I am infinitely a Gainer,
" whilst I run no Hazard; If it be not

* Λογίζομαι γὰρ ὃ φίλε εταίρε (καὶ θεάσαι ως πλεονεκτικῶς) εἰ μὲν τουχάτοι ἀληθῆ ὄντα ἃ ἐγὼ λέγω, καλῶς δὴ ἔχει τὸ πειθῆναι. Εἰ δὲ μὴδὲν ἐστὶν τελευτήσαντι ἀλλ' ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ τὸν χρόνον αὐτὸν τὸν πρὸ τῆ θανάτου ἥττον τοῖς παρουσιν ἀνδρὶς ἔσομαι ὀδυρόμενος; ἢ δὲ ἀγνοιά μοι αὖτις ἐξυδιαλεῖ (κακὸν γὰρ αὖτ' ἦν) ἀλλ' ὀλίγον ὕστερόν ἀπολεῖται.

Platon. Phædon, p. 91. H. Stephan.

“ immortal, I can lose nothing : On the
 “ contrary, I must be allowed to be still
 “ a Gainer, by my having been, through
 “ these Hopes, less sensible of the Evils
 “ of this Life.” And he concludes, that,
 “ where Things are not absolutely certain,
 “ we should pursue those Measures which
 “ may be most advantageous, with least
 “ Hazard.”

Upon the Whole, we have seen it
 plainly proved, that, as we act upon Pro-
 babilities in all our most important world-
 ly Affairs, so we must act with more
 Readiness upon Credibility in the Con-
 cerns of the next World.

And as he who, in temporal Matters,
 should refuse to act upon such Grounds,
 would be pronounced turned in his Head ;
 so he who, with Regard to the momen-
 tous Interests of the next Life, should re-
 fuse to act agreeably to strong Credibility,
 must, with much stronger Reason, be
 justly pronounced to act as a Madman,
 or without common Sense.

From what has been proved, it is ob-
 vious to remark upon the great Absurdity
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of those, who represent Faith or Belief, as a weak or insufficient Ground of Acting, or that those, who proceed upon it, are more credulous, or of worse Understanding than other Men. The Men of Pleasure, or the Worldling, who are the Authors and Promoters of such Notions as these, and think themselves to have such Penetration and Strength of Reasoning, above other Mortals, they have not Impartiality enough to see, that, in all their most dear and important worldly Concerns, that are not present to their Senses, they go upon nothing else but Belief, or oftener upon Opinion, which is a Degree of Assent, still weaker; they think themselves happy, if by the best Advice they can act upon the most credible, or probable Grounds that, in the Case, may be had; and what is this, but acting upon Belief and Opinion; that is, such a Persuasion of the Mind, concerning the Credibility, or Probability, of any Proposition, as is sufficient to engage a Man to order his Conduct suitably to such a Persuasion?

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And here we must take Notice, by the Way of the Reason, why God has not given us, in the Affair of Religion, such Evidence as may force our Assent. Why, some may say, hath not God given to all Mankind, Evidence of a future State of Happiness to the Good, and Misery to the Bad, sufficient effectually to convince them of the Certainty of both? This would fix Religion on an immoveable Foundation, it would make all Men virtuous, and consequently happy. To this the Answer is obvious. God's infinite Wisdom, in all his Dispensations to the Sons of Men, must deal with them according to the Natures which he hath given them : He hath made them free, and hath given them absolute Liberty of Choice, and upon that uncontrouled Freedom depends all the Morality of their Actions. It is that which makes them virtuous or vicious, and that only renders them capable of Reward or Punishment. Beside, therefore, the Petulance and Presumption of calling the Creator's Conduct in Question, to ask, Why God hath not given Evidence sufficient

cient to extort the Assent of Men's Minds, is to ask, Why God doth not alter and reverse the Nature of the Things which he hath made? It is to ask, Why God hath made Men so free as they are, and so capable of Reward and Punishment as they are framed?

For manifest it is, that, if there were Evidence sufficient to extort the Assent of all Men's Understandings, all bad Men would be forced to be happy, they would be compelled into Heaven; which is the Reverse of what God hath intended, and would be an absurd and an inconsistent Treatment of a free Creature. In a Word, the forcing the Consent of the Understanding would, in some Degree, be the forcing the Concurrence of the Will; which if it may not be pronounced to be the destroying the Liberty of Men's Will, yet would it be manifestly the lessening that Freedom of Choice; they would not in such Case be intirely free, and consequently they would not be capable of being properly vertuous, in the only true and just Sense of the Word. But for whom,
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and upon whose Account, is God thus requir'd to alter the eternal Constitution of Things, and the essential Nature of the Beings that he hath made? It is for the Sake of those Spirits who place their Happiness in confounding and destroying that Order, that Symmetry, that Beauty, that Happiness in the Moral World, which God desires, and above all Things loves, in his Works,

Creatures that so abuse and pervert their own Natures, and the Nature of the Things that God hath made, as to make Happiness to be Misery, and Misery to be Happiness! Those apostate Rebels, who renouncing the Will of their Creator, that infinitely wise Establishment which he hath made in the Nature of Things, (which is nothing but the Security of their own true Happiness) set up their own Will in Opposition to his, whilst nothing will satisfy them, but an Establishment of their own.

On Account of such Beings as these, God must alter even his own Nature, as well as the Nature of Things, and, forcing the Assent of their Understandings, and the

the Concurrence of their Wills, compel them to be for ever happy in Company with the Spirits of just Men made perfect, a Thing that is impossible.

The Sum is : Because they think fit to confound the Nature of Things, he must do so too ; but this is among the Things that God cannot do. He cannot deny himself. He cannot in any Instance act otherwise than agreeably to the Right and Truth of the Case.

S E C T.

S E C T. III.

Of the true Nature of the Christian Faith.

WE are come now to enquire what that Faith is, which the Christian Dispensation requires in those, to whom with it's Evidences it is proposed.

That the Christian Religion requires Faith in all, whether *Jews* or *Heathens*, to whom it is fairly proposed, is plain from several Passages of Scripture, which call for it in very strong Terms.

The most remarkable is that above-mentioned, which we find in St. *Mark's* Gospel, (Ch. xvi. Ver. 15, 16.) *And he said unto them (his Disciples) go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

Here Faith or Believing is manifestly required in all, to whom the Christian Religion

Religion is preached, and that, under the dreadful Penalty of Damnation. But it must be observed, that it must be properly proposed to, and fairly laid before all, or they cannot incur the Doom denounced against Unbelievers. The Orders were, *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature, &c.* They were to have the Gospel preached to them in such Manner as the most proper Opportunity of careful and exact Instruction requires; and then it is declared, *That he that believeth not* (after such proper and sufficient Information) *shall be damned.* And, agreeable to this, the Apostle speaks to the *Romans*, (Ch. x.) *How can they believe in him, of whom they have not heard; and how can they hear without a Preacher?* Concerning this therefore, as it is also grounded on the first Principles of all Reason, there can be no Doubt.

Supposing then that the Christian Religion, with the Evidences of it's Truth, have been fairly and fully proposed to any Person, and that he has had the properest Opportunities of sufficient Information;
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the Question is, *What is that Faith, or Belief, which is required in him, under the Penalty of Damnation?* To this I answer, first in the General, upon the Principles which we at first laid down (in which all are agreed) that God will deal with every Man whatsoever, according to the Advantages and Opportunities which he has enjoy'd. And altho' he will certainly require it from every Man, that, to the best of his Power, he sincerely make use of all Opportunities of informing himself in the true Method of serving and pleasing him, (which is what we mean by true Religion.) Yet it is repugnant to common Sense, to suppose that he will expect as much Faith, either as to the Extent of Information, or the Degree of his Persuasion, in a poor illiterate Man, as he will expect from a Person who has all, or most of the Advantages which good Talents from Nature, Education, Letters and Leisure can give.

And this is agreeable to what we find declared in the Gospel, viz. *To whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom Men have committed*

ted much, of him they will ask the more,
(Luke, Chap. xii, Ver. 48.) But,

Secondly, We farther affirm, that God will also require it from every Man, to whom the Christian Religion is fairly proposed, that he so far have a Regard to the Goodness of its Precepts, as to enquire, with Industry and Impartiality, into those Evidences which the Christian Religion carries along with it, to prove that it comes from God. This follows from what has been already laid down. For as God will require it of every Man, to whom the Christian Religion is proposed, that he observe all the moral Precepts of it, and it being Part of the moral Precepts of Christianity, that we should prove all Things, and hold fast that which is good : That we should try the Spirits whether they be of God : That Men should be always ready to give an Answer of the Hope that is in them : That all should endeavour to increase in the Knowledge of God. These moral Precepts requiring, that Men should use great Industry and Care in examining into any Doctrine, that by

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its Purity, and other Evidences, appears to be a Revelation from God. It being of the last Importance, and of infinite Concern to them, that they inform themselves particularly as possible, in all Things relating to the Methods of serving and pleasing him, and concerning that future State of Happiness or Misery, to which all Mankind have apprehended they shall come. It being a Duty of Morality, that Men should, like the * *Bereans*, be noble and generous in these their important Enquiries; that with an unbiaſſed Freedom, Sincerity and Impartiality, diſengaged from ſlavish Prejudices, and vicious Prepoſſeſſions, they ſhould earneſtly purſue the Truth, and embrace and adhere to it, whereſoever they find it. Theſe being all the Dictates of natural Reason, Parts of the Law written on the Hearts of the *Gentiles*, as well as the moral Law of Chriſt; it follows, that God will certainly require it of every Man, to whom the Chriſtian Religion is fairly propoſed, that he faithfully praſtiſe theſe Duties, and

* *Acts* xvii. 11.

enquire with Industry and Impartiality into those Evidences, which the Christian Religion carries along with it, to prove that it comes from God. If therefore any such Person thro' Sloth or Sensuality, Prejudice or Partiality, or thro' the Influence of any Vice, do neglect to examine the Credentials of the Christian Religion, God will certainly punish Unbelief arising from such Vice, in the same Manner as he will punish any Vice or Vices whatsoever.

He who acts thus will fall under the Sentence pronounced against him that believeth not; or if, in his Enquiries concerning these Matters, any Truth cannot find Admission into his Understanding, through any vicious Turn of his Mind, or of his Will; if, thro' any wordly Motives or Attachments to the Riches, the Pleasures or the Grandeur of this World, any divine Truth cannot gain Admission into his Head or his Heart; or, if influenced by Fear or any base Motive, he will not avow his Persuasion, tho' he cannot inwardly refuse his Assent. If he doth not profess and maintain the Truth (the Foundation of Virtue) to which his Mind has yielded

its inward Approbation ; as all of this Sort is Vice, which is in the Power of his Will to correct, and which by the Law of Nature he is bound to reform ; the Rejecting of a Revelation, which is caused by such Vice, will certainly be more eminently punished than even the Vice itself from which it proceeds ; it will incur the Penalty denounced against him that believeth not. For it will be confessed, that every Thing vicious in any Man, if unreformed, will be justly punished, in Proportion to the Evil it produces in the World, or as its Tendency is great to produce Evil to Mankind : Now nothing has a more fatal and desperate Tendency to produce Evil to Mankind, than the Rejecting a Revelation that comes from God ; as it deprives Men of the greatest Advantages that they are capable of receiving, *viz.* Direction from God himself, as to the Methods of serving and pleasing him, and Information as to what will become of them when they die here ; Things of the most weighty Consequence to them all ; Things concerning which they can hope for no Intelligence,

ligence, unless it come from God. It leaves them in the State of the benighted Heathens of the Earth, and gives them up to the most hideous Idolatry and Polytheism which ever took Place in all Nations of the World, if not prevented by a Revelation from God; than which (Polytheism and Idolatry) nothing is more abhorr'd in the Sight of God. In a Word, as it robs them of the necessary Means and Assistances given them by their God, for the Attainment of all Virtue, and the Avoiding of all Wickedness, it is fairly chargeable with all the desperate Degeneracy and Corruption, that would have been prevented in the World, if such Revelation were properly received.

But Thirdly, As we have shewn, that God will require of every Man, to whom the Christian Religion is fairly proposed, such a Belief or Persuasion of the Truth of it, as may influence him with Industry and Impartiality to enquire into those Evidences which it carries along with it, to prove that it comes from God; so it is certain, that the Christian Religion doth

also require in every such Person, after such Enquiry made, such a Belief or Persuasion, that Jesus Christ was the Messiah sent from God, as may effectually determine him to live, according to his Commands, a godly, righteous, and a sober Life.

To make this appear, it will be necessary to examine some of those Passages of sacred Scripture, which plainly shew, what Believing was required by Jesus Christ, and by his Apostles, in order to any Persons being saved.

One of these Passages we find (*John xi. 26.*) where Jesus declared, *Whosoever believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?* (said he to *Martha.*) Her Answer immediately shews, what we are to understand by Believing on Jesus, viz. she saith unto him, *Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ the Son of God.* Hence it is plain, that Believing in Jesus, in order to eternal Life, was * *Believing him to be the Messiah.* Again,

* By this Faith, as to the first and primary Sense thereof, is understood, the being truly and firmly persuaded

Again, When Jesus, in order to try the Apostles, whether they were rightly grounded as his Disciples, asks them (*John vi. 69.*) Whether *they also would leave him, as others had done?* Peter replies, *We believe, and are sure, that thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*

Here St. Peter's Answer, as *Martha's* in the former Instance, plainly shews, that the *Believing Jesus to be the Messiah*, was the great Foundation of their being his Disciples; and accordingly Jesus declared, upon Peter's making this Profession, that, upon this Truth so confessed, *He would build his Church as upon a Rock*; it was to be the grand Foundation of Christianity. Agreeably to this, we find St. *John* declaring (*John xx. 30.*) that the

persuaded in our Minds, that Jesus was what he professed himself to be, and what the Apostles testified him to be, the *Messiah* by God design'd, foretold, and promised to be sent into the World to redeem, govern, and instruct Mankind. The being persuaded of all Truths connected with these. The being persuaded of the Truth of the Gospel, which was revealed and taught by Jesus and his Apostles.

No other Faith was by the Apostles required. *Vide Dr. Barrow, Vol. II. Pag. 54, 55.*

bringing Men to believe this great Truth, in order to their obtaining eternal Life, was the End of all the Wonders which Jesus wrought, and of the Writing of the Gospel, viz. * *These are written that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have Life thro' his Name.* Accordingly
St.

* Archbish. Tillotson's Works, Vol. II. Pag. 470. You have here the Nature of Christian Faith described; it is a Believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: That is, that he is the true Messiah prophes'd of in the Old Testament, and promised as the Saviour of the World; and that he is the Son of God, who came from the Father into the World, and took our Nature upon him, that he might teach us, and go before us, in the Way to eternal Happiness.

Ditto Pag. 471. To believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is, truly and properly, sanctifying, and justifying, and saving Faith. These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have Life thro' his Name. *John xx. 31.*

Ditto Pag. 476. That this is truly and properly Christian Faith is evident, because it includes a Belief of the whole Gospel, as of all the Revelation which God hath made to the World by Jesus Christ.
And

St. *John* delivers the same fundamental Truth in the vth Ch. of his first Epistle, in these Words, *viz. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, i. e. is truly one of the Sons of God, thro' Jesus Christ; he is a true Christian. And* elsewhere in more general Terms; as (*John iii.*) *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.* So also at the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th Verses of the same Chapter. In the xvith Chapter of the *Acts* of the Apostles we read, That the Jailor of *Philippi* demanding of *Paul* and *Silas*, *Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?* The Apostles reply, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy*

And certainly there cannot be a more proper Notion of Christian Faith, than to believe the Revelation which God hath made. But to believe that Jesus is the Christ, is to believe all God doth include in all this. For whosoever believes him to be the Messiah, and the Son of God, believes him to have come from God, and to be authorised and commissioned by him, to make known his Mind to the World, And consequently whatever he delivers he will believe.

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House. When upon *Philip's* Preaching Jesus to the Queen of *Ethiopia's* Treasurer, (*Acts* viii.) he demanded upon coming to a Water, *See here is Water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?* *Philip* said, *If thou believest with all thine Heart, thou mayest.* The Convert replies, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God;* upon which *Philip* immediately baptized him. From these Passages of sacred Scripture, it is exceedingly plain, that the Believing insisted on by our Lord and his Apostles, in order to any Man's becoming a Christian, was *the Believing that Jesus was the Messiah.* But here the Question returns, *viz.* What are we to understand by Believing that Jesus was the Messiah? Doth it imply no more than the bare Persuasion of the Mind, that Jesus was the Christ, so long promised and expected? To this every one who knows any thing of Christianity can easily give an Answer, by the clear Reply which *St. James* gives to it in his iid Chapter; Believing or Faith in Jesus Christ, as the Messiah, implies a great deal more; it implies Works fuitable and conformed to Christ's

Christ's Laws, and a Determination of Mind to look upon every Thing as Truth that appears to be revealed by Christ, because he is persuaded that Christ came from God. It is a Faith that shews itself by Works; *I will shew thee my Faith* (saith the Apostle) *by my Works; for as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without Works is dead also.*

Here it is manifest, that there are two Ingredients which constitute true Christian Faith, *viz.*

First, The inward Persuasion of the Mind concerning the Fundamentals of Christianity; and Secondly, Actions suitable and conformed to the Laws of Christianity. For the Apostle manifestly declares, That whatsoever a Man's Belief may be, whatsoever may be the Degree of inward Persuasion of his Mind, unless true Christian Works accompany it, it is no more true Christian Faith, than the dead Carcase of a Man is truly a Man: Since, therefore, it is manifest, that Christian Actions are, to true Christian Faith, what the Soul or Spirit of a Man is to
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the Man ; it follows, that Christian Actions are the Life and Soul of Christian Faith.

That they constitute the more valuable Part of it ; that as the Soul is, in Worth intrinsick, infinitely superior to the Body, so Christian Works are vastly the more important Constituent of true Christian Faith. That as the Goodness of the Man depends solely on the Goodness of his Soul, so the Worth of true Christian Faith is solely to be estimated by the Actions which it produceth. That as a Man is a good Man, if his Soul be good, however weak or small his Body may be ; so that, whatever the inward Persuasion of any Christian's Mind may be, either as to Extent of Information, or the Degree of Conviction, if he believes that Christ was sent from God, to redeem and instruct Mankind, and that all which he taught is Truth ; and if the Man orders his Life and Actions agreeably to his Laws, God will certainly, upon the Terms of the Gospel, allow his Faith to be true Christian Faith.

Before

Before we quit this Subject, we must observe, that the Christian Faith, which we have here described, is required by the Gospel of Christ in a *Jew* or Heathen, to whom the Christian Religion is fairly proposed : It follows, therefore, that it will, with much stronger Reason, be required of those who are born of Christian Parents, who have been baptized, and have received Assurances and Advantages, which the *Jew* or the Heathen have not received, and have none of the Difficulties to struggle with, under which they, who have been educated in another Religion, must ever be supposed to labour.

Upon the Terms of the Gospel, Assistance extraordinary is plainly promised to those who have been baptized ; and the same Gospel hath laid it down, as a Maxim, that to whom much is given, of him, in Proportion, God will expect the more.

But such Persons have far less Difficulties to struggle with, than the *Jew* or the Heathen, to whom the Christian Religion is proposed. It is known to all, who are
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in the least Degree acquainted with human Nature, or the World, how strong the Power of Prejudices is, which take Place in Favour of a Religion, in which any Person has been educated. In order to a Man's being in any good Degree free from the Tyranny of their Influence, the most valuable Qualifications of the Mind and Heart are necessary. He must be a sincere and impartial Lover of Truth, determined to embrace and acknowledge it wheresoever he meets it. He must have Industry and Patience, carefully to examine the Reasons upon which he hath received the Religion, in which he hath been educated; and with Attention to consider the Evidences of the new one, that contradicts or interferes with, that puts an End to, or overturns a Religion, which he has thro' his whole Life looked upon, as sacred. He must have an honest Heart, preferring Right and Truth upon all Occasions, to all other Considerations whatsoever: Finally, he must be in a good Degree free from all vicious Attachments to the Riches, the Pleasures, and the Grandeur of this World;

World ; for, otherwise, if the Truths to be examined interfere with any of those vicious Attachments, they will never get Admittance into his Head, or his Heart. Now, as the Acquiring these valuable Qualifications, and the Divesting ourselves of the contrary Dispositions, will be acknowledged by all to be a Work of Difficulty to a *Jew* or *Heathen* ; so also it is manifest that a Person, born of Christian Parents, is ordinarily, in a great Measure, free from those Difficulties and Disadvantages, under which the *Jew* or the *Heathen* must, in such Cases, unavoidably labour.

The Case therefore of the Person born of Christian Parents being evidently, by many Degrees, easier than that of the *Jew* or the *Heathen*, whatsoever will, upon the Terms of the Gospel, be expected from them, is with stronger Reason, and greater Strictness, required from the Person who is called a Christian.

Here a Question may be asked, that deserves to be taken Notice of, *viz.* Can it be sufficient to render a Man a true Convert

vert to Christianity, and to entitle him to Baptism, that he believe the one Article, *viz.* That Jesus is the Messiah sent from God? Hath it not always been required, that we believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, which are contained in the Apostles Creed?

To this the Answer is obvious, *viz.* He who believes that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God, of Course believes whatsoever he finds to have been taught by him. Whatsoever Point then is called an Article of Christian Faith, as soon as it is proved to have been taught by Christ or his Apostles, he who believes Jesus to be the Messiah, of Course believes it to be Truth; because he is convinced that it comes from God, the Fountain of Truth, who cannot be deceived himself, and cannot deceive others. He therefore who believes Jesus to be the Messiah, of Course believes all that has been taught by him, that is, believes all the Articles of the Christian Faith.

S E C T.

S E C T. IV.

In which the Nature of Christian Faith is more fully explained, by examining the Properties of Abraham's Faith, which Christians are bound to imitate. The first Property attributed to Abraham's Faith is considered, viz. That it was grounded on Reason.

ST. Paul hath employed the whole fourth Chapter to the *Romans*, in celebrating and explaining the Faith of *Abraham*. At the 11th Verse, he is called the Father of all them that believe, tho' they be not circumcised, that Righteousness might be imputed to them also. It is also plainly recommended, that all should walk in the Steps of the Faith of our Father *Abraham*; that is, that, with respect to our Believing in God, all Christians should take Care, to act exactly as we are told *Abraham* did; we are care-

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fully to copy his Example, that our Faith may be as nearly, as is possible, like his, in every Particular. That, as his Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness, so Righteousness might be imputed to us also; that is, that, on Account of the Excellence of our Faith, we may be approved in the Sight of God, as *Abraham* was, and accepted, as he was, as righteous Persons on the same Account.

Since, therefore, it plainly appears, that *Abraham's* Faith in God is here proposed to us as a Pattern, which all Christians are to endeavour exactly to copy; it is absolutely necessary that we consider carefully the Nature of it, and mark the several Qualities attributed to it, that recommended it so much to God, and caused it to be proposed to us for our Imitation.

But it will be, first, necessary for the better Understanding of this Matter, to give a short Relation of *Abraham's* Conduct in this Affair, and of what gave Occasion to it. It is a Postulatum, a Truth that will be allow'd by all, that God can, if he pleases, make any Man as certain of his

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his Revealing any Thing to him, as he can make him be of any Point whatsoever, even of his own Existence. In this Way, therefore, God reveals himself to *Abraham*, and gives him the strongest Assurances that thro' one, who should descend from him, all the Families of the Earth should be blessed. He assures him, that, notwithstanding his Wife *Sarah* had been long barren, and tho' he and his Wife had been long past the natural Time of having Children, yet that from him, by her, his Posterity should be as numerous as the Stars of Heaven *. Now, tho' this

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* Mr. *Lock on Hum. Underst.* Book iv. Ch. 16. Beside those we have hitherto mentioned, there is one sort of Propositions that challenge the highest Degree of our Assent, upon bare Testimony, whether the thing proposed agree or disagree with common Experience, and the ordinary Course of Things, or no. The Reason whereof is, because the Testimony is of such an one, as cannot deceive, or be deceived, and that is of God himself. This carries with it Assurance beyond Doubt, Evidence beyond Exception. This is called by a peculiar Name, *Revelation*, and our Assent to it, *Faith*; which as absolutely determines our Minds, and as perfectly
excludes

was against the Course of Nature, and a Thing in itself exceedingly improbable, yet *Abraham* being first assured, that the God of Truth had declared it to him, he would not suffer himself to doubt of the Performance of the Promise, not even when he was commanded by God to sacrifice the Son thus promised, and which he had received from God, in so wonderful a Manner; reasoning (λογισάμενος) as the Apostle speaks to the *Hebrews*, *That God was able to raise up Isaac, even from the Dead. He staggered not, faith the Apostle, (Rom. iv.) neither at the Deadness of his own Body, tho' he was near one Hundred Years old, nor yet at the Deadness of Sarah's Womb, who was near Ninety. In the most extraordinary Trial, that was ever made of any Man, He staggered*

excludes all Wavering as our Knowledge itself; and we may as well doubt of our own Being, as we can whether any Revelation from God be true. So that Faith is a settled and sure Principle of Assent and Assurance, and leaves no manner of Room for Doubt or Hesitation. Only we must be sure that it be a Divine Revelation, and that we understand it right.

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not, but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God, being fully persuaded, that what God had promised, he was able to perform; And, therefore (saith the Apostle) it was imputed to him for Righteousness. That is (as Expositors understand it) God accounted him a righteous Person, with regard to his Faith, or the Righteousness of the Faith which he had, as the Apostle expresseth it. Upon the Whole, we may easily collect from this Account which the Apostle hath given us of Abraham's Faith in God, that these following Properties were found in it, viz.

First, His Faith was the Result of Reasoning (*λογισάμενος*) Computing or Reasoning (as the Assembly of Divines render the Word) *That God was able to raise up Isaac, even from the Dead.*

Secondly, Another Property, that so recommended it, was the eminent *Righteousness of the Faith which he had; a Seal (saith the Apostle) of the Righteousness of the Faith which he had.*

Thirdly, His Faith was a *full Persuasion of his Mind; he was fully persuaded*

(saith the Apostle) *that what God had promised, he was able to perform.*

Fourthly, By his Faith, *He gave Glory to God, i. e.* He did him due Honour,

First, One Property of *Abraham's* Faith was, that it was a reasonable Faith; it was groundèd in, and was the Result of Reasoning*.

The original Word (*λογισμενος*) taken in its strict and proper Sense, signifies the clearest and closest Reasoning, that our Understandings are employed in, *viz.* about Numbers; in our Bibles, it is render'd *Accounting*; and the Assembly of Divines render it by the Word *Reasoning*: *Abraham* reasoning that God was able to raise up *Isaac*, even from the Dead. And it is notorious, that, in the natural and proper Sense of the Word, it signifies the Mind's Going thro' any Steps of Rea-

* Dr. Barrow's Works, Vol. II. Pag. 2. Infidelity in its Nature doth involve an affected Blindness, and Ignorance of the noblest and most useful Truths; a bad Use of Reason, a Disregard of God's Providence, or Despight thereto, Abuse of his Grace, bad Opinions of him, and bad Affections toward him,

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soning, that may be necessary to solve and answer any Doubt or Question that may occur to it.

The Apostle therefore plainly affirming that *Abraham* reasoned in this Affair between God and him, it necessarily follows, that the Faith of Christians, which is to be a Copy of *Abraham's* Faith, must like his proceed on the only sure Ground of Reasoning; on the proper and modest Use of our Understanding and free Powers, concurring with the Assistance of God's Spirit. This is intirely agreeable to other Passages of Scripture, as it is grounded on the best Reason. That it is grounded on the best Reason, is evident; for what, but the proper Use of our Understandings, can distinguish Truth from Falsehood, Right from Wrong, and false Religions from the true*? If the Use of Reason is

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* Archbishop *Tillotson's* Works, Vol. II. Pag. 464. I cannot imagine how Men can do greater Dis-service to Religion, than by taking it off from the rational and solid Basis on which it stands, and bearing the World in Hand, that Men ought to believe without Reason; for this is to turn Faith into Credulity,

to be shut out, in the important Affair of Religion, will not all Religions, the very best and the worst, be upon the same Footing?

dulity, and to level Christian Religion with the vilest and most groundless Enthusiasms, that ever were in the World ; as if *Bellarmino* had been in the right when he said, That *Faith was rather to be defined by Ignorance, than by Knowledge.*

Dr. *Barrow*, Vol. II. Pag. 19. Faith implieth a good Use of Reason. This is that which commendeth any Virtue, that a Man, acting after it, doth act wisely, in Conformity to the Frame and Design of his Nature, or like a rational Creature ; using his best Faculties in the best Manner, and in their proper Operations toward the Ends intended by the all-wise Creator.

It was a foul Aspersiō cast upon our Religion, by its antient Opposers, that it did require *ἄλῆν καὶ ἄλογον πίστιν*, a meer Belief, void of Reason, challenging Assent to its Doctrines without any Trial or Proof. This Suggestion, if true, were I confess a mighty Prejudice against it, and no Man could, indeed, justly be obliged to admit it upon such Terms. But it is really a gross Calumny, such a Proceeding being disclaimed by the Advocates of our Religion, being repugnant to the Nature and Tenour thereof, being prejudicial to its Interest and Design, being contrary to its Use and Practice. Never any Religion was, indeed, so little liable to the Censure of obtruding

Footings? Can any one be pronounced better than another, unless our Reason try them, and give the Preference? Have

truding itself on Men's Credulity, none ever so freely exposed itself to a fair Trial at the Bar of Reason; none ever so freely invited Men to scan its Pretences, yea, provoked them for its Sake, and for their own, upon the most important Considerations, at the Peril of their Souls, as they tendered their own best Advantage, to a fair, discreet, careful Examination thereof. Other Religions have, for their Justification, insisted upon the Example of Ancestors, Custom and Prescription of Times, large Extent and Prevalence among Crews of People, Establishment by Civil Laws, and Countenance of Secular Powers (Arguments extrinsecal, and of small Validity in any Case) declining all other Test and Verdict of Reason: But our Religion confideth in itself, and the pure Merit of its Cause; and therefore warneth Men in a Case of such Moment, laying aside all Prejudice, to employ their best Understandings on an industrious and impartial Search of the Truth; referring the Decision and Result (so far as concerneth each particular Man) to the Verdict of that Reason and Conscience, with which God, in order to such Purposes, hath endued every Person. Such is its Method, and it hath not Need of any other; God having provided and exhibited Arguments abundantly sufficient to convince any Man of its Truth, who is not affectedly blind and stupid, or wantonly slothful or careless, or frowardly stiff and obstinate.

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we any other Method of distinguishing Truth from Falshood, what comes from God, from the Impostures of Men, or the Delusions of the Devil? And therefore it is, that the Christian Revelation calls upon all Mankind, and requires them to (1 *Thessal.* v. 21.) *Prove all Things, and to hold fast that which is good.* (1 *John* i. 4.) *To try the Spirits, whether they be of God.* (1 *Peter* iii. 15.) *To be alway ready to give a Reason of the Hope that is in them.* (*Luke* xii. 57.) *And why, even of yourselves (saith Christ) judge ye not what is right?*

Thus it is evident, that the Spirit of God, and the Light which we have from Nature, both require us to make a proper and ingenuous Use of our Reason, in the important Affair of Religion; that is, that our Faith or Judgment, concerning Religion, may be grounded, as *Abraham's* was, upon just and candid Reasoning, and be the Result of a proper Use of our Understanding and free Powers, concurring with the Assistance of God's Spirit.

From

From the Reasonableness of *Abraham's* Faith, in whose Steps all Christians are required to walk, it is obvious to remark on the gross Mistake of those who represent Christian Faith to be Credulity, or a Forwardness to believe, without or against Reason *.

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* *Brown's Answer to Toland*, Pag. 126.—
Thus we see how groundless all those Objections are, and malicious Insinuations against us, and our most holy Faith, as if we, in any Point of it, declined the strictest Examination of Reason. We are so far from distrusting our Cause, or obliging Men to walk blindfold, that we give their Reason all the Helps we can, and Men are never better disposed for the Belief of our Christian Mysteries, than when they follow the Guidance and Conduct of it. For our whole Christian Faith is grounded on the strictest Ratiocination.

Ditto, Pag. 28. All the Revelations of God admit of the strictest Enquiry, and severest Search of our Reason, and it is this which distinguisheth them from the wild Extravagancies of Enthusiasts, and the Delusions of the Devil.

Dit. Pag. 48. It is every Man's native Right and Privilege to examine and judge of every thing before he gives his Assent to it, and it is this alone which distinguisheth our Christian Faith from blind Credulity, because it admits of such Enquiry.

Ditto,

This is an Imputation, brought on the Christian Religion, by those whose Fondness for their Vices has made them its Enemies, because it tells them the Truth, and condemns them and their favourite Sins. It is against them and their whole Conduct, and therefore they will be against it. They therefore set themselves to misrepresent it, all they can, in every Instance, and particularly in this fundamental One, that it will not bear the Test of Reason ; because it insists so much on Faith, that is, on a reasonable and a righteous Judgment concerning it, and re-

Dit. Pag. 26. God, by requiring Men's Assent to his Revelations, does as little Violence to their Minds as to their Bodies, and leaves their Reason as full a Scope, and as great a Liberty, in Matters of Religion, as in any thing else.

Dit. Pag. 47. All the Revelations of God are in a Way suitable to those Powers of Knowledge we have, and he requires us to believe nothing but what is just and reasonable.

Barrow, Pag. 51. To believe is the Effect of a persuasive Argument, and the Result of Ratiocination ; whence, in Scripture, it is commended or discommended, as implying a good or bad Use of Reason.

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quires it under a severe Penalty ; they misrepresent it, as requiring a fond and easy Credulity, that takes Things upon Trust, without or against Reason ; thus making it an unrighteous Scheme, which if it were, it could not have God for its Author. But we see it is evident from the Scriptures, that the Christian Dispensation not only permits, but requires us to use our Reason, with all honest Industry, in the Examination of it. It calls upon all Mankind, and demands a Scrutiny, and to be tried at the Bar of impartial Reason ; and we have seen that one Ground of the great Praise that is given to *Abraham's* Faith, that caused him to be called the Friend of God, was, its being the Result of Reasoning.

Another obvious Remark suggests itself from the Reasonableness of *Abraham's* Faith on the Gross, and fatal Mistake of those who take Christian Faith off from the rational Foundation on which the God of Truth hath placed it, and make it appear in any Instance an unreasonable Scheme.

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Some Protestants, and all Papists, have done great Prejudice to the Christian Religion, by this pernicious Conduct. Among Protestants, some have been found to maintain, that true Christian or Saving Faith is something to be felt, rather than understood; that it is in the Heart, rather than in the Head; and in the Will, rather than the Understanding: Whereas the Truth is, it never can be true Christian Faith, till it is in both the Head and the Heart; in the Head, so as, in Concurrency with the Spirit of God, to influence the Heart, and Will, and Affections, and consequently our Actions.

They call it a Leaning and Rolling upon Christ, the Applying him, the Laying hold on him, or Recumbency on him*. They maintain

* Dr. Barrow, Vol. II. Pag. 63. There is another more new Notion devised by some, which if it be not more plainly false, yet is more obscure and intricate: It is this, That Faith is not an Assent to Propositions of any kind, but a Recumbency, Leaning, Resting, and Rolling upon, Adherency to the Person of Christ, or an Apprehending and Applying to ourselves the Righteousness of Christ: His Person
itself

maintain that true Christian Faith is something not to be described. Tho' the great Apostle *St. Paul* hath given us several of the Properties of *Abraham's* Faith, which
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itself and his Righteousness, as simple, incomplex Things, not any Proposition, are the Objects, say they, of our Faith; that they expressly caution against. They compare our Faith to a Hand that lays hold upon Christ, and applies his Righteousness; and to an Eye that looks upon him, and makes him present to us, and by looking on him, as on the Brazen Serpent, cures us. But this Notion is so intricate, these Phrases are so unintelligible, that I scarce believe the Devisers of them did themselves know what they meant by them; I do not, I am sure. What it is for a Man's Mind to lean upon a Person, otherwise than by assenting to some Proposition that he speaks, or relying upon some Promise that he makes; to apply a thing otherwise than by consenting to some Proposition concerning that thing, I cannot apprehend or reach; there is not any Faculty or Operation of a Man's Mind, which answers the Intent of such Notions or Phrases.—I conceive these new Notions and Phrases (for such they are, not known to antient Christians, nor delivered either in Terms, or Sense, in Scripture) do much obscure the Nature of this great Duty, and make the State of Things in the Gospel more difficult and dark than it truly is, and thereby seem to be of bad Consequence,

all Christians are bound to copy, and described it as the Result of Reason, as a righteous Faith, and such a full Persuasion of the Mind, as influences our Actions.

Tho'

quence, being apt to beget in People both dangerous Presumptions, and sad Perplexities ; for, they hearing that they are only, or mainly, bound to have such a Recumbency on Christ, or to make such an Application of his Righteousness, they begin to work their Minds to it, and when they have hit on that Posture of Fancy, which they guess to suit their Teacher's Meaning, then they become satisfied, and conceit they believe well, altho' perhaps they be ignorant of the Principles of the Christian Faith, and indisposed to obey the Precepts of our Lord. Sometimes, on the other Side, altho' they well understand, and are persuaded, concerning the Truth of all necessary Christian Doctrines, and are well disposed to observe God's Commandments ; yet, because they cannot tell whether they apprehend Christ's Person dexterously, or apply to themselves his Righteousness in the right manner, as is prescribed to them, they become disturbed and perplexed in their Minds, questioning whether they do believe or no.

Thus by these Notions, or Phrases rather, are some Men tempted fondly to presume, and other good People are wofully discouraged by them ; both being thence diverted, or withdrawn from their Duty. Whereas, what it is to believe as Christians antiently,

Tho' every thing is best described by the Properties of it: And the same Apostle hath defined the Faith, that influenced all the Patriarchs of Old, to be the Confidence (*ὑπόστασις*) of Things hoped for; the Conviction, (*ἔλεγχος*) concerning Things not seen; yet the Authors of this Notion will not allow that Christian Faith is either to be described, or understood.

The Absurdity of this Doctrine is so gross, that I shall spend no more Time in confuting it, only leave it to Reason, to compare the great Apostle's most rational Account of the Faith which Christians are to copy, with their unintelligible Representation of it.

I shall only add, that, next to the Vices of Men, no one Thing has produced so much Infidelity in the World, as this most pernicious Practice, of representing the Christian Religion in irrational Lights, the very Reverse of what the Spirit of God

tiently did understand it, and as we have essayed to explain it, is very easy to conceive. Thus much for the Nature and Notion of Justifying Faith.

hath done in Scripture, thereby exposing the Truth of God, to the Scorn and Derision of wicked Men, by putting it in an absurd or ridiculous Dress *.

The Papists have done the same Thing in a much greater Degree, for the worst Purposes. They have not only put the Christian Religion in an absurd and unreasonable Light, but have, in many Instances, made it to be direct Contradiction to God's exprefs Commands ; that is, they have made what they call Christian Religion to be Sin. This they have notorious-

* Archbishop *Tillotson*, Vol. II. Pag. 471. No Metaphorical Descriptions of Justifying Faith are allowable, any farther than as they serve to illustrate and make clear the plain and simple Notion of the Thing. They otherwise serve to no Purpose, but to blind and obscure the plain and simple Notions of Things, to seduce and mislead the Understandings of Men, and to multiply Controversies without End. And I the rather take Notice of this Abuse of Metaphors upon this Subject, because I do not know any other Head of Divinity which hath suffered so much by them, as the Doctrine of *Justifying Faith*; whereby the plain Truth hath been very much obscured, and Occasion given to many endless Disputes.

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ly done in the ſeveral Inſtances of worſhipping and praying to Saints and Angels, dead Men and Women, Stocks and Stones; in praying to God in an unknown Tongue; in taking away the Uſe of the Holy Scriptures from the People, and taking Half of the Communion from them, by denying them the Cup.

Theſe are direct Tranſgreſſions of God's expreſs Laws, and therefore Sin. And this, I ſay, they have done for the worſt Purpoſes: The Whole Religion of the Church of *Rome*, as it differs from the Holy Scriptures, being a meer worldly Scheme, intirely calculated for the Riches, the Power and Grandeur of this World, for the Enriching and Aggrandizing the Biſhop of *Rome*, his Partizans and Adherents. This I have elſewhere ſhewn more fully, * and that by theſe Practices the Church of *Rome* has been the fruitful Parent of Infidelity.

They have made the Chriſtian Religion to be an abſurd, an unrighteous, and a ſinful Scheme, and have made thinking

* *Vide* Sect. XIV.

Men, but vain of their Understandings, renounce it in the Gross.

But he that would be, with *Abraham*, the Friend of God, must, as he did, take Care that his Religion be the Result of Reasoning, of a fair, an humble, and unprejudiced Use of our Understandings and free Powers, concurring with the Grace of God.

SECT.

S E C T. V.

In which the Second Property of Abraham's Faith is considered, viz. The Righteousness of his Faith.

THE Second Property of *Abraham's* Faith, as it is represented by *St. Paul*, was the Righteousness of it; *Circumcision was the Seal of the Righteousness of the Faith which he had, Rom. iv.* This Property is here manifestly attributed to *Abraham's* Faith, and is of the last Importance to the Explaining the true Nature of Faith, and particularly, to the Putting of true Christian Faith on an unexceptionable Foundation *.

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* That I have here interpreted the Righteousness of *Abraham's* Faith, in a Manner that is agreeable to the Sense of the best Expositors, appears from the following Quotations.

Poole's Synopsis. Rom. iv. 11. Per Justitiam Fidei suæ, i. e. Per animi Probitatem, quæ partim in Fide Consistit, partim ex Fide nascitur. Gotiq. Carn.

I have before (Sect. I.) shewn, that Faith, in the general, is nothing else but the Judgment of our Minds grounded on the Testimony of credible Witnesses; whatsoever

Corn. a Lapide, Rom. iv. 6. Ad Justitiam Reputatum i. e. ut coram Deo justior appareret & reverâ esset.

Poole's Synopsis. Rom. iv. 11. Justitiam fidei suæ, i. e. Sinceritatem fidei suæ.

Poole on Gen. xv. 6. It was imputed to him for Righteousness, that is, for a righteous and worthy Action.

Drusiq. in Gen. xv. 6. Justitiam dicit viri Boni, Justi, Virtute præditi.

Cartwrightus in Gen. xv. 6. Deus reputavit Abrahamo in meritum et Justitiam, propter fidem quâ in eum credidit.

Poole's Synopsis in Gen. xv. 6. Reputavit pro merito & Justitia ut coram Deo justior appareret.

Barrow's Works Vol. II. Pag. 51. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for Righteousness; that Imputation is plainly nothing else but the Approving him as a righteous Person, in regard to his Faith.

Here perhaps it may be objected that the Doctrine laid down supposeth, that a Man may attain to Christian Justifying Faith by the meer Strength of his natural Powers.

For Satisfaction to the Reader, I refer him to the 6th Section, where it is fully set forth, that true Christian

whatsoever then makes the Judgment of our Minds righteous or unrighteous, the same will most certainly give Righteousness or Unrighteousness to our Faith.

Now, our Judgment, concerning the Credibility of any Point, will then be allowed by God and Man to be righteous : First, When we exert all proper Industry, that is in our Power, in getting full Information concerning that which is the Subject of our Enquiry.

Secondly, When we are not under the Influence of any Prejudice or Passion, any evil Affection, vicious Habits, or any bad Principle that may bias, or mislead our Judgment.

Thirdly, When we readily and fully acknowledge and avow the Truth, where-

Christian Faith cannot be produced in us, without the Influence of God's Spirit upon our Souls ; and thro' this Work it is always laid down, that our natural Faculties must be honestly exerted, so as to concur with the Assistance with which the Spirit of God supplies us, without which we cannot be Christians.

ever we meet it, and however inconvenient it may be, in our present Circumstances.

That our Faith or Judgment, concerning any credible Point, may be allowed to be righteous, it will be absolutely necessary, that we exert all proper Industry, that is in our Power, in getting the best Information we can, concerning that which is the Subject of our Enquiry.

It hath been shewn, that our Faith or our Judgment, concerning Religion, must be the Result of Reasoning, assisted by the Grace of God. But Reasoning cannot properly proceed, unless it hath proper Materials to work upon; and these are to be had by no other Means, but by a diligent Enquiry, and a careful Attention to the Nature and Circumstances of the Case that lies before us. When, therefore, any Man is made a Judge of Matters of Importance, if he be slothful and careless, and neglects to inform himself properly, concerning the Nature and Circumstances of those Things concerning which he is to judge; if he be idle and inattentive to those Mat-
ters,

ters, will not all Mankind, with the greatest Justice, pronounce him to be an unrighteous Judge? *

On

* *Barrow's Works*, Vol. II. Pag. 9. Infidelity doth arise from Corruption of Mind by any kind of brutish Lust; any irregular Passion, any bad Inclination or Habit, any such evil Disposition of Soul doth obstruct the Entertainment of that Doctrine which doth prohibit and check it, doth condemn it, and brand it with Infamy, doth denounce Punishment and Woe to it; whence Men of corrupt Minds, and reprobate concerning the Faith [2 *Tim.* iii. 8.]; and Men of corrupt Minds, destitute of the Truth, are Attributes well conjoined by St. Paul. [1 *Tim.* vi. 5.]

Ditto Page 4. Infidelity is contracted by voluntary Indispositions and Defects; a Stupidity arising from Mists of Prejudices, from Steams of Lust and Passion, from Rust grown on the Mind, by Want of exercising it in observing and comparing Things, whence Men cannot apprehend the clearest Notions represented to them, nor discern the Force of Arguments, however evident and cogent.

Men are apt to entertain Prejudices favourable to their natural Appetites and Humours, to their Lusts, to their present Interests, dictating to them that Wealth, Dignity, Fame, Pleasure, and Ease are Things most desirable and necessary Ingredients of Happiness; so that it is a sad Thing in any Case to
want

On the other Hand, if a Man, in such important Matters, honestly, sincerely, and heartily endeavours, with proper Industry and Attention, to inform himself of the true Nature and Circumstances of such Matters, as depend on his Judgment, both

want them ; all Men have strong Inclinations, biasing them toward such Things ; it is a hard Thing to shake off such Prejudices, and to check such Inclinations ; it is therefore not easy to entertain a Doctrine representing such Things as indifferent, obliging us sometimes to reject them, always to be moderate in the Pursuit and Enjoyment of them ; wherefore Infidelity will naturally spring up in a Mind not cleansed from those Corruptions of Judgment.

Page 16. Vicious Practice doth weaken the Judgment, and stupify the Faculties, so that Men cannot clearly apprehend or judge soundly about spiritual Matters. The same also quencheth God's Spirit, and driveth away his Grace, which is requisite to the Production and Preservation of Faith in us.

Seneca Epistolæ, Page 328. ad Lucilium 94. Nihil proficient præcepta quamdiu menti Error obfusus est. — Idem tibi de omnibus vitiis dico ; ipsa removenda sunt, non præcipiendum quod fieri illis manentibus non potest.

Ditto 352. Nihil igitur proderit dare præcepta, nisi obstantia præceptis amoveris.

God

God and Man will allow him thus far to be a righteous Judge, and in this Respect his Judgment will be allowed by all to be righteous, and to deserve Praise.

But there is another Thing necessary to render our Faith or Judgment, concerning a credible Point, righteous, *viz.* That we be not under the Influence of any Prejudice or Passion, any evil Affection, vicious Habit, or any faulty Principle, that may blind or bias, or mislead our Reason.

The pernicious Influence, that Vice and Passion hath to corrupt and blind the Mind, hath ever been allowed by all Mankind, tho' few or none are sensible of it, in their own Case. It is so great, that one vicious Habit, any one strong Attachment to the sensual Pleasures, the Riches, the Power, or the Grandeur of of this little World, is fully sufficient intirely to mislead our Judgment concerning any moral or divine Truth. This Reason plainly dictates, Vices of all Sorts are the Distempers, the Diseases of the Soul; and as any one severe Distemper, for the Time,

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lessens and impairs the Strength and Functions of the Body ; so doth any Vice, or vicious Passion, weaken and obstruct the Operations of the Soul, and the free Use of our Reason. As the Jaundice gives its own Tincture and Hue to visible Objects, so doth every Vice in the Soul make Things appear in such Lights and Colours as are peculiar to itself, such as are always false, and generally are the Reverse of the Truth.

This the Scriptures fully confirm to us, when they tell us, that out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts (*Διαλογισμοὶ πονηροὶ**) evil Reasonings. The Heart here stands for the Body, all its Passions and Principles. In every Affair that concerns our Duty, or moral Conduct, the Question is, Which shall govern, the Soul or the Body, the Angel or the Brute ? If the Body, any of its Passions or Affections, leads and governs, then Reason and the Spirit of God (that are, or ought to be the governing Principles within us) are deposed. We are

* Matt. xv. 19.

then tied to, and are led by a blind Guide, that violently hurries us on, without Discernment or Distinction of Object, Bounds or Measure.

When Reason and the Spirit of God are thus deposed, and we poorly and basely give ourselves up to be governed by a blind and unintelligent Principle, to which Reason is become a Slave ; are we not then, in the most unfit Disposition imaginable to judge of any Thing that concerns moral or divine Truth ? Whether any Revelation come from God or no ? Are not these two Principles of Reason and vicious Passion, as opposite and destructive of each other, as Light and Darkness, Truth and Falshood, Heaven and Hell ?

Whilst, therefore, we are engaged by the Influence of any one vicious Habit, or evil Principle, in that Interest which is opposed to God's Kingdom, and the Dominion of Reason ; when we are not only engaged, but enslaved, to subscribe to, and obey all the wild Dictates of a blind and tyrannical Guide ; whilst this is our Condition, is it not monstrously absurd to pretend

tend that we can be fit Judges of any Thing, that concerns moral or divine Truths, whether any Doctrine be from God or no ?

This the Christian Dispensation enforceth, when it tells us in the Parable of the Sower, that the Word of God, *the Seed sown, can thrive and live, only in the good Soil of an honest and good Heart*; that is, a Heart that loves Truth and Virtue, for Truth and Virtue's sake, and in which no evil Principle remarkably prevaieth.

For this Reason also, we are required in the Gospel, *Mark i. 15.* to repent that we may believe, *i. e.* to reform all our evil Habits, and irregular Passions, that we may in some Sort be fit Judges, whether Christ's Doctrine be from God or no.

Jesus tells the *Jews, Matt. xxi. 32.* that the Reason why they did not believe in *John the Baptist*, his Messenger and Fore-runner, was, because they repented not: *Ye repented not, that ye might believe him.* And upon the very same Principle it was, that, when *John the Baptist* was sent to prepare the Way for Jesus, the

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Sum of his Preaching was, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.*

This was exactly agreeable to what the Prophet *Isaiab* foretold, above seven hundred Years before, viz. *The Voice of him that crieth in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make straight in the Desert a Highway for our God; every Valley shall be exalted, and every Mountain and Hill shall be made low; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough Places plain; and the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all Flesh shall see it together, for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* The plain Meaning of all which is this, that it was absolutely necessary, to the *Messiah's* being properly received by Mankind, that their Hearts and Affections, every Thing within them, every evil Principle was to be reformed and set right. *The crooked was to be made straight, the rough Places plain, the Mountain and the Hill was to be laid low; every Thing, that exalteth itself against the Dominion of God and right Reason, was to be pulled down, and Reason, that ought to be the governing Principle*

ciple within us, however low, was to be exalted to its proper Station, Dignity, and Power; this Setting-right of all Things within us being the only Way, absolutely necessary, properly to receive and judge of this Revelation of the *Messiah*.

Thus, we see, that in order to our Judgment or Faith, concerning any Point, being righteous, how absolutely necessary it is, that we be not under the Influence of any evil Principle whatsoever; any one strong vicious Habit, or excessive Passion for the Things of this World, being fully sufficient to render us so unfit to judge of any moral or divine Truth, as that it may cause us to reject, as an Imposture, a Revelation from God; this being, in Fact, the Case of the *Jews*, who thro' their Prejudices and Vices rejected the highest Evidence of numberless and undoubted Miracles, which their Eyes beheld.

The last Qualification necessary to compleat the Righteousness of Faith or Judgment, concerning the Credibility of any Point, is, that we readily and fully acknowledge and avow the Truth, wherever

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we meet it, however inconvenient at present it may be to us.

If a Man be appointed to judge in any important Matter, if he doth not acknowledge what he verily takes to be the Truth of the Case, will his Judgment be allowed either by God or Man to be righteous? If he, for any View or Consideration whatsoever, conceals his real Judgment in the Point, and avows and maintains a Sentence opposite to, or different from the Persuasion of his own Mind, will he not be pronounced by God, and all who know this to be his Conduct, an unrighteous Judge? And will not his Judgment or Faith, concerning what is credible in the Case, with all Justice, be condemned as unrighteous? If thro' any little View or Interest, or Attachment to any Profit, or Pleasure, or Power, or to serve, or please any Man or Number of Men, he declines Abetting or Maintaining what he verily believes to be the Truth, and poorly and basely goes against his Judgment, into some little Interest, different from what in his Conscience he thinks to be right : Is not this a

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mean Desertion of the Truth, and of the God of Truth, and, as such, deserving of Punishment? If such a Conduct could be proved upon a Jury or a Judge, would it not be pronounced wicked, and call for all the Penalty, that by any Law of God or Man is enacted against such Conduct? Is not an unrighteous Judgment an unrighteous Action, is it not the Result of the Abuse of our free Powers, tho' supported by the ordinary Influence of God's Grace, and are not all such Abuses punishable? * What is all Sin whatsoever, but the Abuse of our free Powers? Have not Judges and Juries, by our Constitution, been liable to Attaint, for Judgments manifestly unrighteous? And what could be more righteous than a Law, making such Judgment penal, if this Injustice could be as evident to Man, as the Unrighteousness of our Faith, or Judgment, concerning Religion, must always be to God? If the Case happen to be, that, by adhering to the Truth, a Man

* In Fide sunt omnia opera quæ diligit Deus.
Augustinus, Vol. VIII. Page 44. *Basil.*

should

should be likely to suffer Inconvenience, and actual Damage, yet still; if he would preserve his Righteousness, he must never desert the Cause of Right and Truth.

If he doth, he will be treated as a Deserter by him, who hath stiled himself *the Truth*; and hath declared, that *whosoever shall deny him, or be ashamed of him or his Words, before Men, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father.*

On the other Hand, he who, in any Question that concerns Religion, useth all proper Care and Industry in his Power to inform himself aright, and taketh effectual Care, that his Reason is not corrupted or biaſſed by any Prejudice or Passion; or vicious Habit of any Sort; he who, having discovered the Truth of God, will not suppress, or disguise, much less deny it, or sacrifice it, to any Profit or Pleasure, or any worldly Interest whatsoever: He who honestly confesses, avows and adheres to it, even tho' it lay him under some present Inconvenience and Damage in his worldly Affairs; this Man's Judgment, concerning

Religion, will be allowed by God, as *Abraham's* was, to be righteous; and it will be *imputed to him for Righteousness*, as it was to *Abraham*, and he will attain to the high Honour as *Abraham* did, of being CALLED THE FRIEND OF GOD.

From the *Righteousness* of *Abraham's* Faith, it is obvious to remark, that every Man's Faith must be either *righteous* or *unrighteous*: Unbelievers therefore of every Denomination, all who reject, or do not properly receive the Christian Revelation, would do well seriously to consider, whether their Faith, or the Judgment which they have framed concerning it, be not *unrighteous*, and consequently liable to everlasting Punishment? *

Let them always remember, that in an Affair of such vast Importance, where their everlasting Happiness or Misery is in Question, if they, either thro' Sloth, will not use

* *Barrow's Works*, Vol. II. Page 33. All Faith may be deemed voluntary no less than intellectual, and Christian Faith is especially such, as requiring thereto more Application of Soul, managed by Choice, than any other.

Care and Diligence proportioned to their Power, in examining the Credentials which the Christian Religion offers, to prove that it comes from God; or, when they do examine them, if they suffer themselves to be influenced, corrupted, blinded and misled, by any one vicious Passion, evil Affection, or evil Habit, by any Attachment to sensual Pleasure, to Riches, or Power of this World, so as to reject a Revelation from God, as an Imposture; if this be their Case (as I fear it will ever be found to be) the Judgment which they form, that is, their *Faith*, will be unrighteous, and liable to the Punishment of *an evil Heart of Unbelief*. *He that believeth not shall be damned*. Or farther yet, if they are not so blinded or misled, as not see that the Testimonies, brought in Favour of the Christian Religion, are such as, from the Nature of Evidence, ought to be admitted, and determine a Man's Judgment, *which the greater Credibility and Probability, from the Laws of Man's Nature, ought always to do*; if this be their Case, and they will not acknowledge the Truth which they

see, on Account of their Attachment to some sensual Pleasure, or Profit, or Interest of some Sort, of this little World : In this Case also, I say, that their Faith will be accounted unrighteous, and they will be liable to the dreadful Penalty of *an evil Heart of Unbelief*.

And now I think we may appeal to the common Sense of all Mankind, who are in any Degree unprejudiced, whether any Thing can be in a higher Degree probable, than that there never yet was a Person, who rejected the Christian Religion as an Imposture, who will not be found under one or other of the aforementioned Cases. His Faith or Judgment, concerning it, will be found upon Examination to have one, or more, of the aforementioned Faults, which will render it unrighteous in the Sight of God and Man, and consequently justly liable to the dreadful Penalty denounced against Unbelievers.

They who know any Thing of the World, and will consider what Sort of Men they are, who reject the Christian Religion, will most certainly find, that
they

they are Men of irregular Lives, in some Respect or other ; they either now live, or have lived, without ever properly repenting, in the Practice of some Vice or Vices ; and, that being the Case, it is not at all a Wonder, that they reject Christianity, or if they be finally and for ever rejected by their God, for the *Unrighteousness* of their Faith, the Unrighteousness of the Judgment which they have framed of Religion.

There is in them the *evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God*, which hath been here set forth, and *he who thus believeth not, shall be damned*,

S E C T. VI.

In which the third Property of Abraham's Faith is consider'd (viz.) That it was a full Persuasion of his Mind.

THE third Property of *Abraham's* Faith is this, *viz.* That it was a full Persuasion of his Mind.

I have elsewhere set forth the several Degrees of the Persuasion of our Minds, and the several Sorts of Knowledge arising from those several Degrees of Persuasion.

That Sort of Knowledge, which is grounded on Testimony, is called Faith or Belief, and it is fully distinguished from all other Persuasions of the Mind, by its being grounded on the Report of credible Witnesses, on whose Knowledge and Integrity we think we have good Reason to rely. When it is grounded on the Testimony of Men, it is called human Faith; when on the Testimony of God, or of those

those commissioned by him, it is called divine Faith.

Faith, whether human or divine, should be carefully distinguished from Opinion, (as we have already observed) which is grounded, not on Testimony, but on Conjectures and Guesses of our own, from what we have formerly observed, concerning the Nature of the Thing, that is the Subject of our Enquiry.

Faith in the Testimony of excellent Witnesses, is the Foundation of the Christian Religion, and that it affords Ground for a much stronger Persuasion of the Mind, than Opinion can do, hath been set forth. I shall here only repeat (for it can hardly be too much inculcated) that we have the same Sort of Evidence, concerning the Things of the next World, which we have concerning the Affairs of this, *viz.* the greatest Credibility and Probability that may be had in every Case. We go on cheerfully, and don't object to this Evidence, which we have in our temporal Concerns, and the first Principles of common Sense, and the Laws of our Nature

ture oblige us, in the same Manner, to proceed on the greatest Credibility and Probability that can be had, concerning the Affairs of a future State.

But the third Property attributed to *Abraham's* Faith is, that it was grounded on a full Persuasion of his Mind; he was fully persuaded, that what God promised, he was able to perform.

The Question therefore here is, What is the peculiar Purport of these Words, *he was fully persuaded?*

A full Persuasion of the Mind (taking the Words in their strictest and most rigorous Sense) seems to imply such a Conviction, as excludes all Doubt or Scruple; but that this cannot be the proper Meaning of the Words here, is manifest, because every Christian is obliged to have the full Persuasion, which *Abraham* had; but to have such a Conviction, as excludes all Doubt or Scruple, * is not to be had by all Men, in all Points grounded on Testi-

* Hesychius explicat. πληροφορία per βεβαιότητα, firmitatem.

mony ; this is a Thing impossible, but no Man can be obliged to what is to him impossible ; this therefore is an impossible Sense of the Words.

As Faith, or the Judgment which a Man formeth concerning Religion, is the great and most important Concern of all Men, of the lowest as well as the highest, of the same Importance to the slow and weak of Understanding, as to the acute and subtle, this, and every Property of it, ought to be explained in such a Manner, as may render it intelligible and attainable to those of mean Capacity, and then it will be easy and plain to all, as Things necessary to Salvation ought always to be.

Now we have from St. *James* the very Explanation of this Property of *Abraham's* Faith, which we want. He tells us, that the highest Perfection of *Abraham's* Faith was, that it was such a Persuasion of his Mind, as produced such Works as were expected from it. *Was not Abraham our Father justified by Works, when he offered up Isaac his Son upon the Altar ? Seest thou how Faith*

Faith wrought with his Works, and by Works was Faith made perfect.

Here it is plain that suitable and proper Works, was that which in the Sight of God gave *Abraham's* Faith its highest Completion and Perfection. From whence it necessarily follows, that, by the full Persuasion of *Abraham's* Mind, we cannot understand any Thing more or higher, than that it was so far strong, as to produce in him Obedience to God's Commands.

The sole End of Christian Faith, is the Producing in us a godly, righteous, and sober Life; whatsoever compleatly answers the Ends, for which it was designed, will be allowed by all, to be compleat in its Kind.

We cannot therefore, with Propriety, say more of any Faith, than what *St. James* saith of *Abraham's*, viz. That it compleatly answer'd its End; that it produced proper and suitable Works, and was therefore compleat and perfect in its Kind: *For by Works is Faith made perfect.*

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The Degree then of Persuasion that was in *Abraham's* Faith, which is called a full Persuasion of his Mind, was nothing else but such a Belief, such a Conviction of the Mind, as was fully sufficient to produce Actions suitable to the Commands of God.

This is a plain Meaning of this important Point, obvious and easily understood by the lowest Capacity ; as it is the Explanation which *St. James* giveth of it, so it is such, as can leave no one in Doubt, as to those important Questions which have possess'd, with anxious Scruples, many honest Minds, *viz.* When is our Faith strong enough ? What is that Degree of Christian Faith that is necessary to Salvation ? Besides, as we hinted before, this Footing, on which *St. James's* Explication puts this Degree of our Faith, is intirely agreeable to Reason and the Nature of Things.

For such a Degree of Belief, as necessarily excludes all Doubt, is ordinarily in no Man's Power ; but to reform all vicious Habits and evil Dispositions, in order to our being proper Judges, whether the
Christian

Christian Religion comes from God, and to apply in Prayer for God's Assistance; these Things are in the Power of all Men, to whom the Christian Religion, with its Evidences, is proposed.

These are the equitable Terms proposed by Jesus to Mankind; and whoever honestly proceeds thus far, whatever Scruples such Man may have (as no Man can ordinarily be supposed free from Doubts, any more than he can from Mistakes) yet if he be so far persuaded, that Jesus Christ was sent from God, to redeem and to instruct Mankind, as according to Christ's Commands to lead a godly, righteous, and a sober Life, and believes all that Christ hath taught to be Truth, this Man may be most assured that he hath true Christian Faith; that he is a true Christian, and, as such, hath an undoubted Claim to all the many and great Benefits offer'd to Mankind by the Gospel.

This is *the full Persuasion*, which every Christian, in Imitation of *Abraham*, is bound to have; and as we have shewn it to be intirely agreeable to Reason, as it renders

tenders a nice, and otherwise difficult Point, easily to be understood by every Capacity; as it is equitable and righteous, and in every Man's Power, it will be required of every Man, who receiveth the Christian Religion, that he have this full Persuasion of it, *viz.* such a Persuasion as sheweth itself (like *Abraham's*) by suitable Works, in a Conversation agreeable to Christ's Commands, in a godly, righteous, and a sober Life.

But it may still be urged, that a full Persuasion of the Mind seems fairly to exclude all Doubt and Scruple; and that the full Persuasion of *Abraham's* Mind appears to have been such, for that he cannot be supposed to have had any Doubt concerning what was revealed to him.

To this, the Answer is plain and obvious. Whether *Abraham's* Faith excluded all Doubt and Scruple, God only can tell, and God hath no where told us that it did.

We are told indeed, *that he stagger'd not at the Promise*, and *that he was strong in Faith*; but the strongest Belief and Dependence

pendence on the Veracity of God, may very well consist with an accidental Scruple, not as to God's Performance of his Promise, but upon the Question, *What hath God promised?* Or, *as to the Meaning of his Promise, in some particular Instance.*

God hath, indeed, highly commended *Abraham's Faith*, and recommended it to us in a very particular Manner, for our Imitation, but the Ground of the Recommendation is not said to be its Excluding all Doubt or Scruple; but this, that it was perfect in its Kind, and therefore fit to be a Pattern; and that which render'd it perfect in its Kind, is expressly declared to be its Producing proper and suitable Works: *Seest thou how Faith wrought with his Works? And by Works was (his) Faith made perfect.*

Works therefore, proper and suitable Works, are, by God's express Appointment, the only Touchstone and full Proof, both to God and Man, that our Faith is Sterling, as *Abraham's* was, and that we act as *Abraham* did, under a full Persuasion of our Minds.

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If we depart from this plain Rule, that God hath given us, in this important Matter; we shall plunge ourselves into endless Doubts, and wander for ever in Confusion. Perhaps, no one Thing has perplexed and disturbed so many honest Minds, as the finding in themselves some Doubts in Matters of Faith, which they know not how to get over.

They cry to their God, with the Man in the Gospel, whose Son was possess'd, *Lord, I believe, help thou my Unbelief.* They are at a Loss to know *whether they truly believe in Christ or no, or whether they believe enough, and whether their Faith be strong enough?* They find some Doubts in their Minds; on one Hand, they know what Stress is in the Gospel laid on Faith, and that our Lord hath said, *he that believeth not shall be damned.* At the same Time, they have a confused Notion, that some maintain, that true Christian Believing must exclude all Doubt; this has thrown many on the Rack, they live in Anxiety, and die in Horror. For the Service of such honest Minds, we see the

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Spirit

Spirit of God hath put the Matter on the plainest Footing, and made the Way so easy, that the *Way-faring Man*, tho' foolish, need not err therein. God has manifestly made our Actions the Standard of our Faith, and, if they be truly Christian, Jesus has engaged the Veracity of God, that his Faith shall be so too. *If a Man will do God's Will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* (*John vii. 17.*) Whosoever therefore professeth himself a Disciple of Christ, and sincerely and honestly endeavours, according to his Commands, to lead a godly, righteous, and a sober Life; he who allows and indulgeth himself in no one sinful Course of Life, and professeth that he believeth Christ to be sent from God, and that all which he taught in the Gospel is Truth; this Man will, at the last great Day, be allow'd by his God, thro' the Merits of his Saviour, to be a true Christian; he will be allow'd to have been one of *his Family* on Earth, and to make one of *his Household* in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Before we quit this Subject we can't but observe, in Relation to the Doctrine laid down in this Section, from St, *Paul*, concerning the Righteousness or Unrighteousness of our Faith, how fully it agrees with what Jesus himself deliver'd, *John* vi. 29.

Our Faith being righteous or unrighteous necessarily implies a good or bad Use of our free Powers, of our Understanding and Freewill; that is, it implies good or bad Actions, for which we are accountable; for what are our accountable Actions but the Exertions of our free Powers?

Now some of the five Thousand, whom Jesus had fed with five Loaves and two Fishes, looking on him as a Teacher sent from God, begg'd to know from him (*John* vi. 28.) what they should do that they might work the Works of God? Jesus said unto them, *This is the Work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

Here is plain, that Jesus pronounced Faith, or Believing on him, to be a Work,

a Work of God, *i. e.* a most important Work, which, if honestly and righteously perform'd, would render us eminently acceptable to God; as *Grotius* speaks upon the Place, *Opera Dei sunt opera apprimè Deo grata*; and consequently, if dishonestly or unrighteously executed, must render us in a high Degree offensive in his Sight.

Thus we see Jesus laid this Foundation of the Reasonableness of Christian Faith, *St. Paul* built upon it, and *St. Chrysostom* has applied the Doctrine in the same Manner, as it is here applied. *

* Ἰεσαΐων ποτὲ λεγόντων πρὸς τὸν Κύριον, τί ποιήσομεν ἵνα ἐργασώμεθα τὰ ἔργα τῷ Θεῷ; ἀπεκρίνατο πρὸς αὐτοὺς, τὴντο ἐστὶν τὸ ἔργον τῷ Θεῷ ἵνα πισεύσητε εἰς ὃν ἀπέστειλεν ἐκείνος. Ὅρα πῶς τὴν πίσιν ἔργον ἐκάλεσεν. Οὐκοῦν ἅμα ἐπίστευσας, ἅμα καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις ἐκδήμησας. Οὐκ ὅτι δὴ ἐλλείπει πρὸς τὰ ἔργα, ἀλλ' ὅτι καθ' ἑαυτὴν πίσις πλήρης ἐστὶν αγαθῶν ἔργων. *Chrysostom* Tom. VI. Page 178. *Par.* 1636. *Sermo de Lege Naturæ.*

In ipsa fide sunt omnia opera quæ diligit Deus. *Augustin.*

S E C T. VII.

In which the fourth Property of Abraham's Faith is consider'd, viz. That he gave Glory to God.

A Fourth Qualification of *Abraham's* Faith, which all Christians are bound to copy, is this, *viz.* That by his Faith he gave Glory to God,

We have already consider'd the Righteousness of *Abraham's* Faith; as he was perfectly just and righteous, in every Step that he took, in Relation to the Persuasion of his Mind, so of Course he was perfectly just to his God.

But as the great Apostle here expresseth his doing Justice to God, by the stronger Terms of giving him Glory, it is fit that we principally consider it in that Light.

I shall first enquire how, and in what Sense, *Abraham* was eminently just to his

God, and gave Glory to him; and then it will easily appear, in what Respects the Unbelievers of these Days are eminently unjust to their God, and do him the greatest Dishonour.

First, It is the constant Way of speaking, confirm'd by common Use, and grounded upon Reason, That if you readily and fully depend upon the Word and Promise of a Man of Character, and shew that you have the utmost Confidence in him and Dependence upon him, you will be said to do Justice to the Man of Worth, you will be allow'd to do him Honour. You are said to do Justice to him, because you shew you have those Sentiments of him which he well deserves, and has a just Claim to; and you do him Honour, as it is the highest any Man can arrive at, to be deemed by all a Person so righteous, just, and faithful, that upon his Word and Promise you may absolutely depend, as upon the highest Security.

Now this Way of speaking, which takes Place between Man and Man, is by St. *Paul* applied to *Abraham's* Conduct towards

wards his God. He stagger'd not (saith the Apostle) at the Promise of God (tho' it was of a Thing, in the common Course of Nature, next to impossible) but was strong in Faith, and gave Glory to God.

As we are assured by the Apostle that *Abraham* reason'd, and made the best and most righteous Use of his Understanding in this Matter, so the Principles, that any rational Man would go upon in such a Case, are manifestly these, *viz.* First, the Ground and Foundation of all, must be the clearest and fullest Conviction that God had spoken to him, and given him the Promise of a Son, thro' whom all Mankind should be blessed.

The next Principle that *Abraham*, or any righteous or reasonable Man, would go upon in such a Case, is this, *viz.*

That God is all-powerful, and therefore he is able, nothing can hinder him to perform his Promises; and, as he is unalterably righteous, just, and faithful, it is impossible that he should fail of making good what he engages to perform.

This even the Heathen discover'd by the meer Light of natural Reason. *Plato*, in his second Book concerning a Republick, infers it from a good deal of Reasoning: " Wherefore (saith he) there can be
 " no Cause assigned, why God should falsify his Word. Therefore God is plain
 " unmixed Truth, both in Word and
 " Deed; it is not possible that he should
 " either change or deceive." These are the Words of a Heathen on the Subject. *Abraham* therefore having these just and righteous Sentiments of God, and making a just and righteous Use of his Understanding, he reasoned (saith the Apostle) that God was able to raise his Son from the Dead; he had the strongest Confidence in, and the firmest Reliance on God's Promise, That he would give him a Son, tho' he should sacrifice the one he had, and tho', in the ordinary Course of Things, it was next to impossible that he should have one. But having the strongest and fullest Persuasion of God's infallible Veracity and almighty Power, notwithstanding all the Difficulties that were in
 the

the Way, he had not the least Doubt concerning the Performance of the Promise, but did Justice to God, and gave Glory to him (as *Grotius* speaks upon the Place) “ By thinking, and speaking, and “ doing such Things as reflect the greatest “ Honour upon God;” such as are agreeable and suitable to the boundless Perfections of his Nature, who is the first and universal Cause of all Things; to the Nature of that Being who is all in all.

Thus we see how properly, and upon how good Grounds *Abraham* is said by *St. Paul* to have done Justice to God, and have given him Glory. It consisted in his having truly just and righteous Sentiments concerning God, such as he has an undoubted Claim to, and in acting agreeably to those Sentiments.

And this was what *St. Paul* calls the Righteousness of *Abraham's* Faith, as far as that Righteousness regarded God.

We shall now soon see on the other Hand, in what Respects, and from what Causes, Unbelievers of all Sorts are eminently

nently unjust to their God, and do him the greatest Dishonour.

First, The Deists of these Days are eminently unjust to their God, and do him the greatest Dishonour, because they will not allow him the Power of making a Revelation of his Will to Mankind, tho' he should be inclined to do it.

Secondly, In maintaining that tho' God could make a more particular Revelation of his Will to Mankind, and should actually make it, yet that we should no farther be obliged by it, than the Revelation should be made to appear to our Reason to have Fitness and Reasonableness in it.

Thirdly, They do him Injustice and Dishonour, in maintaining that Mankind had no Want of a more particular Revelation of his Will to them.

Fourthly, In maintaining that, if there were Need of it, and if God had it in his Power to make such a Revelation, he would have been obliged to have made it, from the Time that Mankind stood in Need of it.

First,

First, They are unjust, and do God the greatest Dishonour, because they will not allow him the Power of making a more particular Revelation of his Will to Mankind, tho' he were inclined to do it.

The Reasoning (if it may be called by that Name) by which they pretend to maintain this monstrous Opinion is, That, if God should go about to add to the Laws of Nature any Commands, by a particular Revelation, those additional Commands must, they think, be employed about Things indifferent: But that God should make Laws about Things indifferent, is (say they) inconsistent with the Goodness of God, therefore the Supposition of such Laws is absurd and impossible.

Is not this outrageous Injustice and Dishonour done to God? To deny that to the Creator and Governor of the World, that is allowed to the Lawgivers of the Earth. To tell God that he can't do what what earthly Governors not only can do, but what in Justice they are bound to do, *viz.* To make Laws about Things indifferent, which in many Cases if they should omit, they

they would be so far unjust, as they would betray or neglect the Trust reposed in them.

To give one Example out of Thousands : Are not the Time, and Place, and outward Circumstances of the publick Worship of God, Things in their Nature perfectly indifferent ? And yet, doth not the Legislature of every Country, every Day, make Laws about them ? Are not those Laws allowed so far to alter the very Nature of such Things (with Regard to those who are obliged by them) as to make them become necessary ? To them they are no longer indifferent, they cannot transgress those Laws without Sin.

For it is universally allow'd, that whatever is commanded by lawful Authority, if it doth not contradict any Law of God, is no longer indifferent, whatever it was before. This being a fundamental Principle, dictated by the Law of Nature, without which no Society can subsist, *viz.* That all the Commands of our Governors, in Things lawful or indifferent, are to be obeyed : And shall this be allow'd to all
earthly

earthly Governors, and can it be denied, without the most outrageous Injustice and Dishonour, to the supreme and only wise Potentate, the King of Kings?

But what is the Foundation of their Assertion, *viz.* That, if God should make a Revelation of his Will, it must be concerning Things that are indifferent in their Nature?

Is it not manifestly this, *viz.* That all Things, that are in their Nature necessary, are effectually discoverable by the Light, that every Savage has from Reason, and consequently Men have no Need of any Assistance or Direction from Heaven, as to the Methods of pleasing God: And this, as it is outrageous Injustice done to God, I proceed to consider in a few Words, how well it is grounded.

Secondly, Whoever impartially considers what the Condition of Mankind (with Regard to Religion) hath always been, must renounce the first Principles of Sense and universal Experience, before he can maintain that the Light, which we have from Nature, is sufficient to direct Man-
kind

kind to the proper Methods of pleasing God.

Let any impartial Mind but lend its Attention to the State of Things, among those who did, or do now follow the Light of this so much boasted human Reason. How sufficient doth it appear, to direct the poor *East* or *West Indians*, or the Negroes of *Africk*?

Can any Man say, without renouncing common Sense, that they stand in no Need of Light and Direction from Heaven? Is the Light of Nature sufficient in them, to direct them to the Methods of pleasing their Creator? Tho' this shall in another Section be more fully consider'd, I shall at present instance but in one Particular, their so generally, if not universally, giving into Idol-Worship.

Let it be allow'd, that they All have, and always had, some Notion of the Being of a God, and that he ought to be worshiped: Yet how do they worship him? How few are there, where are they to be found, who do not set up Stocks, or Stones of some hideous Shape, to represent the

the infinitely glorious Cause of all Things, and to these raise Temples; to these offer up Sacrifices and Prayers; and to these perform the Rites which make the peculiar Religion of each Country?

How universally did all the ancient Pagans, as well as the Modern, of every Age and Nation of the World, give into the Worship of Idols? And is this the Way of pleasing God? Is it not rather the very Practice which, of all Things displeasing that Men can do, is offensive as any in the Sight of God? If therefore Men, guided by the Light of Nature, have in all Ages and Nations given into this shocking Practice, so monstrous and offensive to God; how can these Men, consistent with the least Degree of common Sense or universal Experience, maintain, that the Light of Nature is sufficient to guide Men to the Methods that are necessary to please their Creator, and that they have no Need of Light or Assistance from Heaven.

And yet this strange Absurdity, so contradictory to common Sense, and to notorious

rious Fact, is their grand favourite fundamental Principle.

But this outrageous Renouncing of all further Light from Heaven, is contradictory also to the Sense, which the best and wisest among the Heathen are known to have had of their Condition.

It is notorious of *Socrates*, the wisest and best among them, how deeply sensible he was of the absolute Necessity Mankind lay under of Direction from Heaven, as to the Methods of serving God, so as to please him : Renouncing all other Enquiries, he applied the utmost Force of his admirable Parts to the Study of human Nature only, and those Ways that lead Men to true Happiness. As he went farther in this Pursuit, than perhaps ever Man did, that was guided by the Light of Nature only, so the Result of his Enquiry, as to this, was, that Mankind were intirely unable to direct themselves in their Behaviour towards God ; and, as he thought they stood in Need of a divine Instructor to be sent from Heaven, so he appears plainly to have had some Hope that such a Person

Person would, in God's good Time, be sent; he seems to have thought it agreeable to the Goodness of God, that what was so absolutely wanted by them, should one Time or other be afforded to them.

Thus thought *Socrates*, and thus thought *Plato*, the best and wisest of the Heathen; of their own Wants and the Wants of all Mankind.

And is human Nature altered? Or have the Savages of *Afric*, or *England*, no Want of Light or Assistance from Heaven, when the ancient Heathen; in the Opinion of the best and wisest among them, lay under so fore a Necessity of it? Such Dishonour do our Deists do to God, in direct Contradiction to *Plato* and *Socrates*, as well as Fact and Experience, telling Heaven that they have no Need of its Assistance. Not more absurd would they be, should they renounce the Sun, the Usefulness of it, and prefer the Darkness of Night to the Light of Heaven.

Thirdly, Our Deists do the greatest Injustice and Dishonour to God, in maintaining, that, tho' God could, and should

make a particular Revelation of his Will to Mankind, yet we should no farther be obliged by it, than the Revelation should be made to appear to our Reason, to have Fitness and Reasonableness in it.

Here it must be observed, that this Assertion supposeth us fully persuaded that the Revelation comes from God, and yet it affirms that it cannot oblige, unless the Fitness and Reasonableness of it appear. How can Words express the Dishonour and Injustice that is done to God, by those who advance such Principles as these? That a Worm of the Earth shall tell its Maker that his Commands cannot oblige, unless to its Short-sightedness the Fitness of them be made to appear.

Is he our Governor? Is he the supreme Judge over all the Earth? King of Kings, and Lord of Lords? And shall every Command of his be disputed, if the Reasonableness of it do not immediately appear to the Stupidity of Men? What earthly Government, what Society can subsist upon such Terms as these? If every Command of a Prince or General, if every Law that

is enacted by the legislative Power, if every Decree of a Judge, nay, if every Order of the Father of a Family is to be disputed, and no Obedience to be paid to them, till they appear to all to be fit and reasonable: What must be the necessary Result of this, in any Nation, Army, or even private Family, but the Reducing every Thing to the wildest Confusion, and most abandoned Anarchy? Shall we deny that to our Creator, which even every Father of a Family justly claims as his Due? *viz.* That his Orders be obeyed, tho' the Reasons of them do not immediately appear: Which of these Gentlemen would not call his Son rebellious, who should presume to act in this Manner? What would they think of the lower Part of Mankind, if they should refuse Obedience to every Law and Command of their Superiors, till the Reasonableness of them should appear? Would they not deem them the vilest Miscreants, and think them worthy of the severest Punishments? And is not this their Case? It is impossible to shew a Difference.

This Procedure of the Deists gives the the lowest of Mankind a Power superior to their Maker ; for, if no Command or Law of God can bind, till they approve of it, as fit and reasonable, Man is then more properly the Lawgiver than God.

This sets every Miscreant in the Throne of God ; nothing can pass into a Law without the Royal Assent of Man, and God's Making a Revelation is no more than an humble Proposal of Advice.

Fourthly, Our Deists do the greatest Dishonour and Injustice to God, in maintaining, that, if God could add to the Light, which we have from Nature, his Goodness would have obliged him to do it, from the Time that Mankind stood in Need of it.

Here again they make Man the Lawgiver instead of God ; and not only will obey no Laws, but such as they make and enact for themselves, they presume so far, as to enact Laws for their God. Nor doth even this content them, they still go farther without Bounds ; they not only prescribe Laws, by which he is to be bound
in

in the Dispensing of his Justice, they will limit and bind him in the Dispensing even of his Favours. Unworthy of the smallest Blessings, Thousands of the greatest Moment are daily shower'd down upon them, But even Favours, Blessings, and Mercies they will accept of, only on their own Terms; for, after all that their God doth for them, they will tell infinite Wisdom, Omnipotence and Goodness itself, that, unless he dispenseth his Favours, in such Manner as they think fit, they will not allow him to be either just or good; or else, because he did not give Mankind a Revelation of his Will, at the Time that their Wisdom thinks he ought to have done it, they will maintain that he hath not done it at all.

Of these *Peter* the Apostle manifestly prophesy'd, in those Words, 2d *Epistle*, ch. ii. v. 1. " There shall be false Teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable Heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift Destruction, and many shall follow their pernicious Ways; by

I 3 " Reason

“ Reason of whom, the Way of Truth
 “ shall be evil spoken of. Presumptuous
 “ are they, *ταλμνται*, self-witted *αὐθαδεις*;
 “ They are not afraid to speak Evil of
 “ Dignities; they speak Evil of Things
 “ they understand not. While they pro-
 “ mise Men Liberty, they themselves are
 “ the Servants of Corruption.”

These Passages are produced principally
 on Account of those two Characteristicks,
 Presumptuous and Self-witted, Properties,
 which were to be found in those who
 should even deny the Lord that bought
 them.

For, tho’ all the Marks do wonderfully
 agree to the Deists of our Days, yet the
 Presumptuous and Self-witted, from what
 has been delivered in this Section, do most
 eminently point them out: But after all,
 Presumptuous and Self-witted may express,
 in Part, some Degree of their Conduct;
 but Language cannot supply Words that
 may come up to the prodigious Enormity
 of such Behaviour, in a Creature to its
 Creator, and infinitely gracious Bene-
 factor.

Thus

Thus it appears in what Instances the Deists are unjust to their God, and do him the greatest Dishonour. Let us now see to what Principle this strange Injustice and Dishonour done to God may be ascribed; that, knowing the main Cause of the Evil, the Remedy may the more effectually be applied.

It has been already largely shewn that the general Cause of Infidelity is Vice, and vicious Habits of all Sorts; but we are here enquiring into the particular Vice that is the more immediate Cause of this Dishonour, that is done to God, by the Conduct of the Deists, and it seems manifest that it is immediately resolvable into Pride.

This Vice is acknowledged to take Place as generally in Mankind as any other whatsoever, and no evil Principle is oftener at the Bottom of our Actions. It is often the Cause of many of our Actions, where it is disguised and concealed; but in this particular Case it appears barefaced, and throws away the Mask.

Pride is an Over-rating of ourselves and of what belongs to us, and the necessary Consequence of this is an Under-rating of others, and what belongs to them.

Now, in the Case that is before us, we find the most extravagant Over-rating on one Side and Under-rating on the other, that can ever be found in any possible Case. It is Man's Over-rating himself (the lowest of reasonable Creatures that we know) in so outrageous and amazing a Manner, as to set his own wretched Pittance of Understanding, and his own Will, above the boundless Wisdom, Knowledge, and Power of that universal Cause of all Things, of him who is All in All. This is Pride in such dreadful Excess, and grown enormous to such a stupendous Height, that nothing can equal or come near to it. No other Pride, and no other Sin, can be in the Sight of God so exceeding sinful.

What Over-rating can come up to that, where a Worm of the Earth prescribes Laws and Rules to Omniscience and Omnipotence? Doth not the Man, in this, make himself equal, or rather superior to God?

God? Must not the Adviser, the Corrector, the Lawgiver, be always supposed rather wiser than the Person to whom the Advice or Law is given? Doth not the Deist tell the Almighty, that he cannot make a Revelation of his Will to Mankind, if he were inclined to do it? That he cannot make a Law about Things indifferent, which the Lawgivers of the World do every Day, and are obliged by their Duty to do? That tho' the all-wise, the all-knowing, the all-powerful God, could, and should make a Revelation of his Will to Mankind, yet that they have a Negative upon him, and that no Law of God can bind, till the Fitness and Reasonableness of it appears to every Man.

That, if he could make a Revelation of his Will to Mankind, he ought to have done it, from the Time that Men stood in Need of it, and not at any Time after; they therefore conclude, that he cannot have done, in any other Time, what they think he ought to have done in their Time.

Is

Is not this Prescribing Laws to God? Is it not Putting Man in the Place of God? Is it not the Making him superior to him, as much as the Lawgiver is superior to the Person to whom the Law is given? To tell the all-knowing God, that, tho' he could, and should make Laws for Men, yet that they are the Judges whether they shall oblige or no; and that, unless the Fitness and Reasonableness appear plain to the Mind of all Men, they may chuse whether they will pay Obedience to them or no.

What Over-rating is here of the lowest Degree of rational Being, that we have any Notion of; and what Depreciating, what Dishonouring of Wisdom, Power and Goodness can approach to this? And consequently, what Pride can come near it (I think we may say) by infinite Degrees? Inasmuch as it is a Rating a poor, blind, narrowly limited, and amazingly defective Being, as equal or superior to infinite Knowledge, infinite Power, and all Perfection infinite in Degree.

As

As no Sin is more offensive in the Sight of God than Pride, so no Sort of Pride, no Sort of Transgression, can call for such a Load of Punishment from the Hand of the Almighty God, as this.

SECT.

S E C T. VIII.

*Shews, in what Sense, the Practice of Virtue
is necessary to the Producing of Faith in
Christ Jesus.*

HERE it must be observed, that by Faith in Christ Jesus, in this Section, we understand the Persuasion of the Mind, that Jesus Christ was sent from God, to redeem and to instruct Mankind. In order to understand the true State of that which is the Subject of our Enquiry, we must observe, that the following Points are not in the least questioned, but are here affirmed, *viz.*

First, That the Persuasion of the Mind, of the Truth of the Christian Revelation, cannot be produced in us, without the Influence of the Spirit of our God upon our Souls.

Secondly,

Secondly, That in the Days of Christ and his Apostles, when Miracles were wrought, for the Confirmation of Christianity, many wicked Men were first converted to Christianity, and then the Persuasion of the Mind produced Works suitable to Christian Faith. Nor do I doubt, but that, even in these our Days, a wicked Man may sometimes first be made a Convert to Christianity, by the Proofs which evince that it comes from God, and then he reforms his Life according to the Commands of Christ.

Thirdly, What the thirteenth of the thirty-nine Articles asserts, is not here, in the least, questioned, *viz.* That Works done before the Grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of Faith in Jesus Christ; for it is not to be doubted, but that to make Men's Actions, in a strict Sense, truly acceptable to God, they must be done in exact Conformity to the Declarations of his Will, which he hath made to Mankind; and they are Questions widely different, *viz.* What is necessary

necessary to make our Actions strictly acceptable to God, and this, *viz.* How far the Practice of Virtue is necessary (Miracles being ceased) to the Producing of Faith in Christ, that he was sent from God; which is the Subject of our present Enquiry.

As to this Point, then, the sacred Scriptures, Reason, and Fact manifestly concur to evince, that ordinarily, and next to the Influence of the Spirit of God, the best Preparative, for the due Receiving of any Revelation from God, is the sincere Practice of all Virtue, insomuch that a Man may reject such Revelation, thro' the strong Influence of some one particular Vice, or thro' the Want of some one particular Virtue.

First, This is agreeable to the whole Tenor of sacred Scripture, and particularly it is clearly grounded in that remarkable Passage, which we have already mention'd, *John vii. 17. If a Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be from God, or whether I speak of myself.*

Here (as we have already observed) Doing God's Will is plainly expressive of the

the sincere Practice of Virtue, as knowing of the Doctrine, whether it be from God, meaneth nothing else, but the Settling a Man's Faith, or the Persuasion of his Mind, concerning the important Question, *viz.* Whether the Christian Religion be a Revelation from God, or whether it be the Invention of Men? The plain Meaning therefore of the Words is this, If any Man will first faithfully practise the Righteousness, Sobriety, and Godliness, that the Christian Religion demands, he shall not fail of settling his Belief aright, he shall judge without Danger of Error, whether the Christian Religion be from God. Here then it is plainly declared, that, with Regard to what is in a Man's own Power, there is no Preparative to Christian Faith of such Importance, as the sincere Practice of moral Virtue.

In the Days of Christ and his Apostles, when Miracles were wrought to prove that they were sent from God, the most profligate Sinners could not, without Violence to their Understandings, resist the Force, with which those Signs from Heaven extorted

torted the Assent of their Minds : But, even then, many Virtues were necessary to proper Judging, and we know that the *Jews*, thro' the Want of them, rejected a Revelation confirmed even by Miracles ; and, since they have ceased, the Practice of Virtue is so far necessary to the Producing of Christian Faith, that a Man may reject a Revelation from God, thro' the Influence of some one particular Vice.

Secondly, That a sincere and honest Disposition to the Practice of Morality, is necessary to our properly Judging, whether the Christian Religion come from God, will appear, if we consider, that the Wickedness of Men has ever been the main Cause of all the false Religions in the World. Superstition of all Kinds, ancient and modern, is only another Word for false Religion. True Religion is, and ever was, nothing else but the Method of serving God, so as to please him ; abstracted from any particular Revelation, the only true Method of pleasing God is, and ever was, the Practice of Virtue ; this appears to have been

been the Sense of the wisest among the Heathens : * But, as Men were ever bent upon indulging their Appetites for the Things of this World, irregularly, and to Excess, that is, in other Words, as they were ever prone to Vice, they have always set themselves to make Religions for their own Purposes; that is, since they could not persuade themselves to practise Virtue, they have ever taken Pains to devise, and establish something in

* *Eusebius* in his *Præp. Evang. Lib. xiii. Ch. 13.* quotes *Menander* to this Purpose, viz. Men do in vain endeavour to make the Gods propitious, by their costly Sacrifices. If they would have the divine Favour, let them love and adore God in their Hearts, be just and holy in their Lives and Conversations.

Tullij de Natura Deorum. Cultus Deorum optimus idemq; sanctissimus, atq; castissimus, plenissimusq; pietatis ut eos semper integra, pura, incorrupta voce veneremur.

Senecæ Epist. 95. Vis Deos propitiare, bonus esto; satis illos coluit quisq; imitatus est.

Persius Sat. 2. Compositum jus fasq; animo, sanctosq; recessus

Mentis, & incoctum generoso pectus honesto.

Hæc cedo, ut admoveam templis, & farre litabo.

the room of Virtue, under the Name of Religion, that was either the Reverse of Virtue, or, at least, had nothing to do with it, but to supplant and overturn it. This has ever been the Case of Heathens, *Jews*, and even those who have been called Christians: And so far have they all given into this, that, in many Instances, they have all, in their Turns, made Religion to consist, either in the actual Practice of Vice, or in something trifling, that had no Efficacy but to destroy Virtue, while it usurped its Throne.

Thus, among the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans*, those Masters of the World, so renowned for Refinement in Arts and Arms, almost every Vice had its Patron, among the Gods which they worshiped: Lust had its *Venus*, Theft *Mercury*, Drunkenness *Bacchus*, Revenge *Nemesis*, War, and the Destruction of Mankind, its *Mars* and *Bellona*; Temples were erected, where the Priestesses were Strumpets, and the Rites Prostitution. Their *Floralia* and *Bacchanalia* were among their religious Ceremonies, in the Celebration of which,
Drunken-

Drunkenness, the wildest Extravagances, and all Uncleanness were perpetrated.

The Murdering of Men, the Offering-up of human Sacrifices, appears to have been, at Times, Part of the Religion of most, if not of all the Nations of the World; even the *Jews sacrificed their Sons and their Daughters unto Devils; they shed innocent Blood, even the Blood of their Sons and their Daughters, and made their Children to pass thro' the Fire unto Moloch.* Many are the Passages in which they are condemned by their God, as placing the Power of Religion in the ceremonial Part of the Law; which he had given them, on Account of the Hardness of their Hearts, and the Grossness of their Minds, which would necessarily lead them into Idolatry; if not taken up with something external, the Object of their Senses; as it often in Fact did, notwithstanding they were so carefully guarded against it.

This also was the great Exception of Jesus to the *Jews*, when he was among them, that they had destroyed all true Religion, by making it to consist in Trifles;

in the Tithing of Mint, and Anise, and Cummin; neglecting the weighty Matters of the Law, Judgment, * Mercy, and Faith, they placed it in external Observances, in outward Ablutions and Cleansings, such as, the Washing of Cups and Pots, brazen Vessels, and of Tables; Thus, † said Jesus, *ye reject the Commandment of God, that you may keep your own Tradition, and you make the Commandment of God of none Effect by your Tradition*; that is, by your substituting your own Devices as true Religion, in the room of all Righteousness, ye have destroyed the genuine, the important Commands of God, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith.

This he chose to instance in the *Jewish* Doctors, having reversed the great Law, of Men's supporting their aged and distressed Parents. A Precept that was bound upon them, by all the dearest and strongest Ties of Nature, was declared by them in no Respect obligatory, provided they presented that Part of their Substance,

* Matt. xxiii. 23.

† Matt. xv. 3, 6.

which

which should relieve their Parents, to the Treasury of the Temple.

But not only *Pagans* and *Jews*, but Christians also, have gone upon the same Principle, viz. the Practising any Thing as Religion, rather than Virtue: They have, to their infinite Reproach, by Decrees of Popes and Councils, and by pretended Traditions, substituted, in the room of many God's express Commands, the Contradictions of them; that is, they have substituted Sin, in the room of true Religion, for, *Sin * is the Transgression of God's Law*. They have made Sin to be Religion; as it is † notorious that the Labours of the Jesuits, in their Casuistry, have been mostly employed in reversing, or overturning all the Morality of the Gospel, either by teaching Doctrines directly contrary to it, or by shewing how the Precepts of Christ may be made to ply to the Vices of Men.

* 1 John iii. 4.

† See Provincial Letters, Mr. *Pascal*, and *Berthier's* Parallel of the Doctrine of the Pagans with the Doctrine of the Jesuits.

Thus it plainly appears in the general, that Men's Love for Vice has been the main Cause of all the false Religions of the World ; and the necessary Result is the great Truth which Jesus hath declared, namely, that the Practice of Morality is intirely necessary, to a Man's being a proper Judge, whether the Christian Religion is from God. *A Man must do God's Will, in order to his knowing whether the Doctrine be from God or no.* A strong Attachment to any one Vice may intirely mislead him, cause him to reject a Revelation from God, and make him properly an Infidel.

Other Passages there are, which plainly contain this Doctrine, that the Heart of Man, the Appetites and Affections for the Things of this World, must first be set right, by the Practice of all Virtue, before a Man can properly judge whether the Christian Religion has its Original from God. * Of this Sort is that, in which
Jesus

* *Seneca Epist. ad Lucil. 24. Nihil proficient præcepta quamdiu menti error obfuscat. Idem tibi de omnibus vitiis dico, ipsa removenda sunt, non præcipiendum,*

Jefus declared, *That out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts*, *Δεσλογισμοὶ πονηροὶ*, evil, or false Reasonings: This is what we have been setting forth. By the *Heart*, all agree, is plainly meant the animal Part of Man's Nature, his Affections and Passions, as contra-distinguished from the rational; from these, then, it is declared, our evil and false Reasonings proceed; the Consequence of which is plain: The Heart must be first set right, by the Practice of Virtue, before we can reason rightly concerning any divine Truth whatsoever.

The same Doctrine he hath delivered, in the Parable of the Sower; there he tells us, that the only Ground, in which the Seed of true Religion will thrive or live, is that of an honest and good Heart: This is what we contend for: That the Setting the Heart right, the Disposing aright the Affections and Passions, and the Keeping them in Order, by the Discipline of Virtue, is the Foundation indispensably ne-

præcipiendum, Quod fieri illis manentibus non potest. Pag. 352. Elzevir. 12^{mo}. Nihil ergo proderit dare præcepta, nisi obstantia præceptis amoveris.

cessary, without which, no Man can hope to be a true Christian; it is declared to be the only Soil, in which the Seed sown, the Word of God, that is, any divine Revelation, can be properly received, with any proper Effect.

From hence, necessarily follows the Point we are upon, *viz.* That a sincere and honest Disposition, to the faithful Practice of Morality, is absolutely necessary to the Producing in any Man true Christian Faith; that, without Morality, no Man can effectually distinguish true Religion from what is false; that, unless a Man do God's Will, unless he be sincerely disposed to the Practice of all Righteousness, he will never properly and effectually judge of the Christian Revelation, whether it be from God, or whether it be an Imposture from Man; and consequently, that the Living in some one Sinful Course, the Allowing, Indulging, and Going on in some one vicious Habit, is ordinarily sufficient to render a Man incapable of rightly judging, and of receiving

ing any Revelation from God ; it may be the Cause of his rejecting it, and, if that be the Case, he will, with the greatest Injustice, be liable to the Penalties denounced against Unbelievers.

SECT.

S E C T. IX.

Shewing, that no Man can attain to true Christian Faith, without the Assistance of the Divine Spirit influencing his Soul.

THO' this Point is taught by the Christian Dispensation, yet let no Man imagine, that it is a Doctrine so peculiar to it, that nothing like it took Place, among the Heathen. We find the same Thing deliver'd in several of their Writings, which have come down to us, viz. That nothing great, or considerable, could be perform'd by Man, without the Assistance of Heaven; and particularly, that this Assistance was given by some divine Influence operating on our Souls, and that this Influence and Assistance was necessary, even to a Man's being virtuous. * *Plato*, in his *Io*, speaks
in

* *Platonis Io. Pag. 534. Hen. Steph. Socrates loquitur: Διδὸν ταῦτα δὴ ὁ θεὸς ἐξαιρούμενος τούτων τὴν νοῦν τοῦτοις χρήται ὑπηρεταῖς, καὶ τοῖς χρησμοδοῖς, καὶ*

in pretty strong Terms even of God's Inspiring Men for good Purposes, as a Thing not infrequent. *Cicero* affirms, that there never yet was a great or extraordinary Man, without some Inspiration, some Influence from the Deity, *Sine aliquo Afflatu divino*; and it is notorious, that *Seneca* and *Socrates*, and *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, taught the same Thing; in one Place, that great and good *Roman* Emperor says, (*P.* 138.) that the Assistance of Heaven is necessary to a Man's being virtuous. And in another Place, Let your Soul, says he, receive the Deity, as your Blood does the Air, for the Influences of the one are no less vital than the other. And, speaking of a bad Man, he says, by neglecting the Assistances of Heaven, he has parted with the Guide of his Understanding, lost the Test of Truth, and the Distinction of Right or Wrong.

καὶ τοῖς μάντεσι τοῖς θεοῖσι, ἵνα ἡμεῖς οἱ ἀκούοντες εἰδῶ-
μεν ὅτι οὐκ οὗτοι εἰσὶν οἱ ταῦτα λέγοντες, ἀλλὰ ὁ
θεὸς αὐτὸς ἐστὶν ὁ λέγων, διὰ τοῦτων δὲ φθέγγεται
πρὸς ἡμᾶς.

Seneca

Seneca in his 41st Epistle to *Lucilius*, * expressly says, that without God, no Man ever yet was good. God is near you, says he, and in you, and dwells in every good Man. But, says he, in his 87th Epistle, unless your Mind be pure and holy, it cannot receive the Deity : This shews it to be a Doctrine agreeable to natural Reason, and not peculiar to the Christian Religion.

The Apostle to the *Corinthians* hath declared, *That we are † not able of ourselves to think any Thing as of ourselves ; for (says he) our Sufficiency is of God. ‡* In another Place, he saith, *I can do all Things thro' Christ that strengthens me ; but ** without me (says Jesus Christ) you can do Nothing.* Upon another Occasion, he expressly declared, *†† That no Man can come unto him, unless his Father who sent him draw him ;*

* *Senec. P. 101. Elzev. 12mo. Bonus vir sine Deo nemo est. In unoquoq; virorum bonorum Deus habitat. Prope est a te Deus, tecum est intus. Deus humano generi ministrat, ubiq; & omnibus præsto est. Pag. 354.*

† 2 Cor. iii. 5. ‡ Phil. iv. 13. ** John xv. 5.

† John iv. 54.

that

that is, no Man can believe that I am the promised Messiah, no Man can come to me, and embrace my Religion, unless God draw him ; that is, unless he be assisted by the Influence of the Spirit of God operating upon his Soul ; and the great Apostle to the *Ephesians* expressly saith, that
 * *Faith is the Gift of God.*

Now, if the Heathens, by the bare Light of Reason, conceived, that Men were commonly assisted by some Influence of the Deity on their Souls ; and that nothing considerable could be perform'd by them, without such Assistance : We have only to shew, that the becoming a true Disciple of Christ is a great and a very considerable Work, and it will then appear intirely agreeable to Reason, that true Christian Faith cannot be attained, without the Assistance of God's Spirit operating on their Souls.

That the becoming a true Disciple of Christ is a great and considerable Work, cannot be doubted by any one who knows but

* Ephes. ii. 8.

a little of the true Nature of Christianity: If Jesus offered nothing alluring to human Nature in its present degenerate State: If, on the contrary, all that he offer'd to Mankind, in the corrupt and depraved Condition, in which they naturally lie, was difficult and discouraging to such weak and perverted Creatures as they are: If promising them neither the Wealth, nor the Power, nor the Grandeur of this little World, on which their Hearts are set; but, on the contrary, plainly telling them, that they would be ill used by the World, on Account of their being his Disciples: If the Reducing all the blind and irregular Appetites of the Body within the Bounds of Reason and Religion, whilst these Affections are grown strong, and Reason weak, by the Depravity and Corruption of human Nature :

If the impartial Considering of the Evidences, that prove the Christian Religion to come from God, doth alone require, that we be not under the Influence of any one strong vicious Habit or Prejudice; if this be the Case, of becoming a true Disciple

eternity of Christ (as it manifestly is) we may well pronounce it to be as great and as considerable a Work, as a Man can undertake in this World ; a Work to which weak human Reason is, of itself, intirely unequal, and, in a Word, a Work, that nothing, but the Aid of the Almighty, can enable us to perform.

But here some may say, If Faith in Christ be produced in us by the Spirit of God, and cannot be produced without it, how comes it to pass, that Infidelity is so great a Crime ? If it is not in meer Man to work this Faith in himself, how can he be answerable for the not having it ? To this the Answer is obvious : God in this, as in all other Cases, supports, assists, and enables us to work, and to do what we ought, provided we properly concur and make Use of his Aid ; but he does not compel us to it. His Grace no more destroys or lessens our Liberty or Freedom to do what we please, than it destroys our Reason and Understanding. He gives us, from Nature, intelligent Powers, to see and distinguish Good from Evil, Happiness

ness from Misery, in every Case ; but he leaves us free, and at full Liberty, to make proper Use of those our rational Powers, or to abuse them.

Thus it is with those Powers that we have from Nature, and the Case of God's supernatural Assistance, the Aid, which God hath promised to all who ask it in Prayer, is just the same. His holy Spirit, by its Operation on our Souls, gives fully sufficient Strength to every Man, to enable him to attain to true Faith in Christ Jesus ; but there is a great Difference between *Assisting* and *Compelling*. This divine Assistance compels no Man ; we are left intirely free, and at our Liberty, to concur, or not concur with this Aid, which our Creator lends us. The Chrissian Religion promiseth it to all that ask it in Prayer : To apply to Heaven for Help, upon every important Occasion, is one of the most obvious Duties of Natural Religion, and was remarkably the Principle and Practice of the Heathen World. They seldom undertook any Thing of Importance, without applying to Heaven.

It

It is good to apply to Heaven for Help, and seek for Mercy, says *Homer**, the oldest Pagan Book that we have: These Heathens had no Promise from God of Help; and yet they not only had a Notion of it, but in their Way of false Worship applied, I fear, much more constantly for it, and had more Dependence on it, than the Generality, even of Christians, seem to do.

Thus, then, stands the Unbeliever's Case; he cannot become a true Disciple of Christ, without the Assistance of the divine Spirit; *for Faith in Jesus Christ is the Gift of God*. It is a considerable Work, and the Heathens could look on it as a fundamental Doctrine (and their Practice was agreeable to it) † that Nothing great, or considerable, could be attained, without the divine Assistance, and Applying for it by Sacrifice and Prayer: Let then the Un-

* Ἐσθλὸν γὰρ Διὶ χεῖρας ἀνασχεῖν αἰεὶ ἐλάσσει.
Iliad. w. 301.

† *Xenophont. Mem. Pag. 206.* Nothing to be Undertaken without Applying to Heaven.

believers in Christ but do as much as the Heathens constantly did : Let them regularly apply to Heaven for Help, and they have the most highly attested Assurance, that they shall receive the divine Assistance, of which the Heathens had no Assurance at all, tho' it was their favourite Principle, and constant Practice. The God who made us, *in whom we live, move, and have our Being*, is ever ready to support us, and to enable us to do what is right, in every Instance, provided we be honest and sincere ; provided we be Lovers of Truth, and Lovers of Righteousness, and apply to him for Help : Let then the Unbeliever take Care, that he be a sincere Lover of Truth, and a Lover of Virtue, and let him beg God's Assistance, and the Almighty, of Course, will give him that Aid, that Strength, that is absolutely necessary to enable him to become a true Disciple of Christ.

Things then standing thus, if the Unbeliever hath no sincere Love for Truth and Virtue, but is rather in his Disposition attach'd to Vice and Falshood (Vice being
Nothing

Nothing else but Falshood in Practice ;) if he will neither beg the divine Assistance, nor make proper Use of it, when it is given him, to enable him to discover Truth, and to act agreeably to it, it is plain, that his Infidelity becomes a heinous Crime, and that generally greatly aggravated ; because nothing but the Influence of some vicious Principles, either Pride, or Sloth, some excessive Attachment to the Riches, the Pleasures, or the Power of this little World, can hinder him to beg the divine Assistance ; or, when it is administred, Nothing else can hinder his Concurrence with it, or his becoming, by that all-sufficient Help, a true Disciple of Christ.

Any Man that rejects, or doth not properly examine, what offers itself as a Revelation of God's Will to Mankind, highly attested, with strong Credentials of its coming from God ; if he doth this under the Influence of any vicious Principle whatsoever, his Infidelity becomes a Crime, that with the greatest Justice, and clearest Reason, will be punished in the same

Manner in which any vicious Habit, or vicious Principle, which produced it, will be punished.

Thus it appears, that notwithstanding true Christian Faith cannot be attained, without the Assistance of the divine Spirit; yet that Infidelity is ordinarily a heinous Crime that will be punished, with the greatest Justice, in Proportion to the Malignity of the Cause that produceth it, as well as in Proportion to the Malignity of the Effects which it produceth.

SECT.

S E C T. X.

*Concerning the due Submission of Reason,
with Regard to the Mysteries of Religion :
In which the Nature of a Christian My-
stery is explained.*

LEST any one should so grossly misinterpret any Thing that hath been, or shall be said in this Essay, concerning the modest and candid Use of Reason in Matters of Religion, or concerning the Reasonableness of Christian Faith, as if it favour'd in any Degree that most absurd and pernicious Doctrine, which maintains that we can believe Nothing to be true, that we do not understand: It will be necessary to put that Matter in as plain a Light as we can; especially as it is of Importanee to the Understanding of the true Nature of Faith in God, or those commissioned by him.

We have now to do with those, who deny that there is any such Thing as a Mystery in Christianity : Tho' the Apostle hath expressly declared, * that, without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness : God was manifest in the Flesh, justify'd in the Spirit, &c. Tho' the same great Apostle expressly calls the Adhering to Christianity, the Holding the Mystery of Faith in a pure Conscience : In Defiance of this, they make a Jest of every Thing in Religion that passeth under the Name of Mystery : But if they would be pleas'd impartially to examine, and to understand what they undertake to judge of, before they give Sentence ; if they will consider, with some Care, what is meant by the Word *Mystery*, they may perhaps find that there is Nothing unreasonable, or justly exceptionable in it, but all that is the Reverse of this. By a Christian Mystery, we mean no more than a divine Truth, which relates to another Life reveal'd to us by God, which we know but

* 1 Tim. iii, 16.

in Part, and, through the Narrowness of our Faculties, very imperfectly understand.

This may give us some general Notion of what we mean by a Christian Mystery : But let us examine the several Steps which every thinking reasonable Man is bound to take, with Regard to any Point that is called a Mystery in Religion; and we shall see plainly, whether he gives into any Thing that is unreasonable, or justly exceptionable,

First, then, it will be observ'd, that, with Regard to any Thing supposed to be revealed by God, there are two important Points, which every reasonable Man will see carefully settled, as they are the Ground of his Assent, *viz.*

First, Whether it be a Revelation from God, or from those who are commissioned by him? And,

Secondly, What is the Meaning of the Words, in which it is revealed?

If he finds that there is sufficient Ground to cause him sincerely to believe that it was

revealed by God, or those commissioned by him ; he has then no more to do, but to enquire what is the proper Meaning of the Words in which the Proposition in Question is revealed ; and, if there be Nothing in them contradictory to the Principles of human Understanding, Is he not bound, by the Rules and Maxims of common Sense, to conclude that it contains a Truth, altho' his narrow Faculties do not fully comprehend it ? Is there any Thing unreasonable or exceptionable, in this Procedure ? Or rather, Is he not bound, by the Laws of his Nature, to act in this Manner ? Is it not agreed on all Hands, as a Maxim, that God cannot be deceived himself, and that he cannot deceive others ? Doth it not from hence necessarily follow, that what God declares, as a Truth, must be such, whether we fully comprehend it, or no ? What is the Thing, the Nature of which we fully understand ? Our Faculties are manifestly made to know only some superficial Properties, not the internal real Nature of the Things,

Things, even of this World : To know that the Things about us have such and such Powers to affect us, and one another, in this or that Manner ; but to know why, or how they are so, for this we were never intended ; and for that Reason, we have not Powers in any Sort equal to the Work. If it be thus, with Regard to the Things of this World, Is it any Wonder, if it be so, with Respect of the Things in the next ? Would not the Wonder rather be, if it were otherwise ? Can there be greater Absurdity in any Proceeding, than to expect to comprehend the Things of the next World more fully, or as fully, as the Things of this ? When therefore, for Example, it is declared by Jesus Christ, and those commissioned by him, * *that He and his Father* (the eternal God) *are One* : And, † *that the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him* : In a Word, that the everlasting God was united to the human Body, and the human Soul of the Man Christ Jesus : This is called in the Christian Revelation, the Mystery of the Incarnation of God

* John x. 30.

† Col. ii. 9.

manifest

manifest in the Flesh: If therefore any reasonable Enquirer, from the Credentials of Christ's Mission, doth verily believe that he was sent from God, he then considers the Meaning of the Words in which this Doctrine, which the Apostle calls a Mystery, is revealed; and, if he finds no Contradiction in the Terms, he will certainly be persuaded that the Doctrine is true, tho' he doth not fully understand it. In this, he proceeds on the clearest Reasoning; for, as we suppose him in this Section to be persuaded that the Doctrine comes from God, it then necessarily follows, that it must be Truth, because the all-knowing God cannot be deceived himself, and the righteous God cannot deceive his Creatures. And his not fully comprehending the Manner, how the eternal God was united to Jesus, is no Sort of Objection to the Truth and Reality of the Union, because we know nothing of the Manner in which any Thing in Nature is done. Do we know how our Souls are united to our Bodies? Or even, how the Parts of the meanest Pebble are united to each

each other? And is our Ignorance of the Manner any Objection to the Reality of the Union?

In this, and in every other Mystery (as they are called in the holy Scripture) there is, as in most of the Objects of our Understandings, something that we do understand, and something that we do not. In the Mystery of the Incarnation, we have some imperfect Notions of the Nature of God, and some superficial Knowledge of our own Nature.

We have also some Ideas suggested by the Words *Union*, and *Joining*, in the many Ways in which the Words may be used; but our Knowledge in this, as it is in most Things, that are even the Objects of our Senses, goeth but a very little Way; we know the Facts, that Things do subsist with these, or those Properties, but why, or how they are, what they are, of this we are utterly ignorant, as to the Things even of this World; and how much more may we well be so, as to the Things relating to the next, which are the Subject of what is called Mystery in Religion.?

Behold

*Behold (saith the Apostle St. Paul) I shew you a Mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a Moment. **

Here is another *Mystery*, as the Apostle calls it, *viz.* the Change of our Bodies at the last Day; it is declared, that our Bodies at the Resurrection shall be changed, and raised incorruptible.

Now, if a Man be once persuaded that *St. Paul* was an Apostle sent from God, to reveal his Will to Mankind (and it is, thro' this Section, supposed that he is so) Can it be any Objection to the Truth of the Doctrine thus revealed, that he has no distinct Notion of this Change that shall be made in our Bodies, of which, probably, in his present State, he cannot have any proper Idea? Would it not be an extravagant Proceeding to reason in this Way? Would it not be contradictory to the first Principles of common Sense? No Man, that believes the Being of a God, will deny that the Creator has it in his Power (if he pleases) to speak to any Man, or Number of Men, in such Manner, as to make them as sure that he has

* 1 Cor. xv. 51.

spoke to them, as they can be of their own Existence. Let then the Reader, of this suppose, that God had in this Manner spoken to him, and that he were as much convinced of it, as he is of his own being alive; Would he go about to doubt the Truth of what God should declare to him, because he but imperfectly comprehends what is so communicated to him? Would it not be the Dictate of common Sense to reason thus, *viz.* The all-knowing and all-righteous God has declared this to be Truth, therefore it must be such, and I will believe it to be such, tho' I cannot fully understand the Nature of it. Nothing but the amazing Perverseness, and Absurdity of some Men's Conduct, could make it decent to enlarge on so plain a Point as this is. In the Affairs of this World, we pay thus much Deference, even to the Testimony of Men.

Suppose a *Siamese* to come into *England*, who never saw Water become hard by Freezing: If he were told by all Men, of whose Probity he had any Opinion, that every Year, for some Part of the Winter,

Winter, Water might here be seen hardened by the Cold ; tho' this, to him, would be exceedingly incredible, and even contrary to all the Notions of those Things that he had ever received, yet, after finding it to be affirmed by Men of all Sorts here, and those of the best Characters for Integrity and Veracity, he would have no Sort of Doubt of the Truth of the Fact, however he might be unable to comprehend how it should be, or reconcile it to the Notions he had got of such Matters. As the great Apostle speaks, * *If we receive the Witness of Men, the Witness of God is greater.* If the *Siamese* would fully and freely believe the Fact, so attested, to be true, tho' he very imperfectly conceives how it can be, the Person, whom we suppose persuaded that a particular Doctrine comes from God, is, upon the Principles of common Sense, much more bound to believe that it is Truth, however imperfect his Notions of it may be.

Whoever knows any Thing of the Nature and Extent of human Understanding

* 1 John v. 9.

must acknowledge, that, as the Apostle speaks, * *we know here but in Part*, there is nothing that we fully comprehend, even of Things natural; if therefore our Creator thinks fit to communicate to us any Thing supernatural, relating to the World of Spirits, Is it any Wonder that we very imperfectly conceive what is thus declared to us? When we are told in the Scriptures, that there three that bear Witness in Heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one, or as Jesus Christ himself spoke, † *My Father and I are one*: If we are convinced that this Doctrine comes from God (which here is taken for granted) What is there in the Terms, that is not reconcileable to our common Notions of Things? Are there not many Things, that are three in one Respect, and one in another? For it is by no Means here affirmed, that these are three and one in the very same Respect. Even in our Nature, there is manifestly a Union between an intelligent thinking Being and

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9. † 1 John v. 8.

Body, between an Angel and the Brute. Here is an Instance very familiar to us: Where two Natures, very distinct, make one Being, nay, what we call one Person: Where then is the Ground of such Doubt and Exception to the Words of Jesus Christ, when he says, that he and his Father are one; or to the Words of his Apostle, commissioned by him, when he declares, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are also one? When any Thing is told us concerning the divine Nature, Is it any Wonder, that there should be something different from our common Ways of conceiving Things? Would not the Wonder rather be, if it were otherwise? But, as if all Ground of Exception were, in this Case, designed to be prevented, our own Nature, consisting of Body and Soul, is so constituted, as might effectually prevent, if we would but attend, our Apprehending any Thing in this Doctrine, that is not reconcileable to the Notions, that even our own Frame supplies us with.

That a Deist, who renounces the Christian Religion, should renounce what is called

called the Mysteries of it, is a Thing of Course, and it would be absurd to expect that it should be otherwise; but even a Deist, that hath any Degree of Ingenuity, must own, that as, with Regard to our Understandings, there are Mysteries in every Thing, it cannot be Ground of Exception, that there are Mysteries in Religion. That as a Mystery, in the general, takes place in all those Things, in which there is but a little that we do know, and a great deal that we do not know, there must be Mysteries in most Things, that are the Objects of our Knowledge: That, as they abound in Thing natural, it can be no Ground of Exception that they are found in Things supernatural, and therefore, that the only Questions that can take place, concerning the Mysteries of Christianity, are these, *viz.* First, whether they come from God or no? And, Secondly, whether there be any Thing, in the Terms in which they are expressed, contradictory to the first Principles of our Knowledge? And as it is confessed, that there is nothing contradictory in them, the single Question

M

is,

is, Whether they come from God, or those commissioned by him?

If upon the Whole it be found, that there is great Credibility and Probability that they come from God, the Laws of our Nature, and the first Principles by which our Reason is to be governed, will oblige us to look upon them with Veneration, and that, as such, they must contain the Truth, tho' we are far from fully comprehending them. Thus reasonable is the Footing upon which, even the Mysteries of the Christian Religion stand. *

* Such Submission of Reason to Faith takes not away the Land-marks of Knowledge, shakes not the Foundations of Reason, but leaves us that Use of our Faculties, for which they were given us. *Lock of Human Understanding*, L. iv. c. 18.

SECT.

S E C T. XI.

*In which the Influence and Efficacy of
divine Faith is considered.*

AS nothing is more to be disapproved and condemned, than any Doctrine that derogates from the Importance and true Value of divine Faith, it will be necessary here to give its full Weight, and to shew for what Reasons, and in what Sense, so much Influence and Efficacy is attributed to it, in several Passages of the Scriptures; nothing being more contradictory to the Intention of these Papers, or more detested by the Author, as of the most pernicious Tendency, than any Thing that tends to lessen the due Force of what is properly called Faith, or Belief, in Matters concerning Religion. Great Weight is, with good Reason, given to it in many Places of the New Testament, and, particularly in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the whole 11th Chapter is employed in Setting

forth the Importance and mighty Efficacy of Faith in God; and, among other Things, it is there expressly declared, * that without Faith it is impossible to please him, whilst all the most eminent and glorious Actions of the Patriarchs and Prophets, of the Old Testament, are in this Chapter attributed to this noble Principle of Faith in God.

Every Thing, that has been deliver'd in this Essay, will be found to agree with, and to confirm, and to establish this Doctrine; and, in order to make this appear, we must by the Way, First, observe, that, when the Apostle declares, that without Faith it is impossible to please God, he immediately explains, what in this Place he meant by Faith, in the same Verse adding, *for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* † Here it is manifest, the Apostle understands, by Faith, a proper Persuasion of the Mind, concerning the first fundamental Truths of Reli-

* Hebrews xi. 6.

† Ibid.

gion, *viz.* the Being of a God, and the Certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments. Now, as the Being of a God has ever been allowed to be discoverable, by the proper Use of our natural Faculties; so the Faith, here mentioned by the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, must be considered, rather as the Result of the proper Use of our Reasoning and free Powers, assisted by the divine Spirit, in Matters of Religion in general, than that we are necessarily to confine it, in Strictness, to Things that are grounded on *Testimony only*: And in Reality, we shall upon Examination find, that all the Praises and Weight, that are any where, in the Scriptures, given to divine Faith, are grounded upon this one great Reason, *viz.* that true Believing in God is the Result of the most proper and righteous Use of the Understanding and free Powers, and God's Grace, in the most important Affair of Religion. And it appears, from what we have already set forth in the former Sections, that there is, in the Nature of Things, great Ground of the high Com-

M 3 mendation

commendation given to divine Faith, inasmuch as it hath been shewn, that a sincere and honest Disposition to the Practice of all Virtue, and the justest Use of our Understanding and Free-will, is so far necessary to the Producing it, that some one vicious Habit may suffice intirely to mislead us, in our Reasonings, concerning any moral or divine Truth whatsoever.

But there is a farther Ground of the great Weight and Importance, which, in Scripture, is given to divine Faith, *viz.* because when, by a Freedom from vicious Attachments and Prepossessions, we become proper Judges whether a Revelation be from God, and have attained to a proper Persuasion that it is of divine Original; then it is, that, under the Power of such Persuasion, we return to the Practice of all Virtue, with Resolution, Vigour, and Zeal, much stronger than before, and are thereby enabled to rise to such Heights in Goodness, as without such Persuasion we could never arrive at.

Thus it appears, that the Value and Excellence of divine Faith consisteth in

two

two Things: First, in the Excellence of those virtuous Habits and Dispositions, and the just Use of our Understanding and Free-will, assisted by the divine Spirit, which we have seen are ordinarily necessary to the proper Production of it; and Secondly, in the Excellence of those Effects which it produceth, namely, the greater Degrees of all Virtue, exerted upon such Grounds and Motives, and directed to such Ends and Views, as render them acceptable to God.

Faith, taken strictly and precisely in itself, for the bare Assent of the Mind to any revealed Truth, cannot have any Thing of true Worth or Value in it; it being evident from the Nature of our Minds, and the Nature of Things, that the internal real Assent of our Understandings must unavoidably ever be proportioned to the Evidence which we see, or think we see; nor can it possibly be otherwise. Now what is not in our Power, and cannot possibly be otherwise, can never be the Object of Praise or Blame, of Reward or Punishment.

Agreeably to this, the Scriptures speak; St. *James*, in his Discourse on the Nature of Faith, thus addresseth the Man who would make some Merit of the bare Assent of the Mind to the Truths of Religion, *James ii. 19. Thou believest there is one God, thou dost well, the Devils also believe and tremble; but wilt thou know, O vain Man! that Faith without Works is dead?* Here he declares, that the Devils have a sad and full Conviction of many divine Truths, and saith, that they actually do believe, taking Belief for the bare Assent of the Mind; but this (as it is the Faith of Devils) he declares to be no more true Faith, than the dead Carcass of a Man is a true Man.

S E C T.

S E C T. XII.

Containing a summary Account of the Evidences, which prove that Jesus was the Messiah, sent from God to instruct, and to redeem Mankind. In which is shewn, that there was in the Jewish Scriptures a Promise made to Mankind, and from thence an Expectation of an extraordinary Person to be sent from God, at a particular Time.

HAVING shewn the Unbeliever what the Nature, Extent, and Degree of that Faith or Believing is, which the Gospel requireth in its Professors, and vindicated it from the Imputation of Unrighteousness and Unreasonableness: Having also laid before him the only true Way, in which he can possibly render himself a proper Judge of the Evidences, which the Christian Religion brings to prove that it comes from God: The next Thing, in Order, is to lay before him such a View of the Evidences, which

which prove that Jesus was the *Messiah*, sent from God, as may be consistent with the designed Limits of this Essay; having done this, we shall see his Case reduced to a very short Issue.

In Order to give a View of the Evidence, which proves that Jesus was the promised *Messiah*, sent from God; it will be necessary, first, to shew, that there was in the *Jewish* Prophecies an express Promise of such a Person, at a particular Time, to be sent from God, and from thence an Expectation, that such a Person should come into the World at that Time. And then, secondly, we will make it appear, that as Jesus did declare, that he was the Person promised, so that he gave the strongest Proofs, that he was (what he declared himself to be) the *Messiah* sent of God. First, that there was in the *Jewish* Prophecies a Promise, that such a Person would be sent from God, at a particular Time, called the *Messiah*, appears from a Passage in the Writings of the Prophet *Daniel*, which runs thus, Ch. ix. v. 24. *Seventy Weeks are determined upon thy People,*

People, and upon thy holy City, to finish the Transgression, and to make an End of Sins, and to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore, and understand, that from the Going forth of the Commandment, to restore and build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven Weeks, and threescore and two Week. The Streets shall be built again, and the Wall, even in troublous Times. And, after threescore and two Weeks, shall the Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the People of the Prince, that shall come, shall destroy the City and the Sanctuary.

Here are four Things foretold, viz. *First*, that there should go forth a Commandment for the Restoring and Building of Jerusalem.

Secondly, That, from the Going forth of the Commandment to the Messiah, was to be seven Weeks, and threescore and two Weeks, or sixty-nine Weeks.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, That after these sixty-nine Weeks, or sometime in the seventieth Week, the Messiah should be cut off.

Fourthly, That then the People and their Prince should come and destroy the City of *Jerusalem*, and the Sanctuary or Temple.

Now here was a Time fixed, from which the *Jews* (to whom this Prophecy was deliver'd) knew how to count for the Coming of the Messiah, *viz.* From the Time of the going forth of the Commandment, to restore and to build *Jerusalem*.

All Accounts agree, Profane as well as Sacred, that, about the End of the thirty-fourth Century of the World, *Nebemiah* received a Commandment from *Artaxerxes*, King of *Persia*, to go and to rebuild *Jerusalem*, as was foretold in this Prophecy of *Daniel*. Now, fixing this Order for the Restoring *Jerusalem* to the Reign of *Artaxerxes*, King of *Persia*, who was called *Longimanus*, we shall find the Prophecy remarkably to fall in with the Time, in which *Jesus* appeared as the Messiah. From
this

this Time thus fixed, to the Cutting off, or Death of the Messiah, was to be near seventy Weeks: It is therefore to be enquired what Time was to be contained in these seventy Weeks.

Here the *Jews* well knew how to count; for, among them, as seven Days, or a Week, was called a *Sabbatical Day*; so seven Years was (by a known Phrase) called a *Sabbatical Week*. A *Sabbatical Week*, then, among the *Jews*, was understood to contain seven Years, and in this Sense it is agreed, the Word *Week* in this Prophecy is to be taken. These seventy Weeks, then, must make up Seventy Times seven Years; that is, four Hundred and ninety Years. Now Jesus is allow'd to have dy'd in the Year of the World 3982; going back then from his Death, seventy Times seven, or four Hundred and ninety Years, you fall upon that Time, when *Nebemiah* received an Order from *Artaxerxes*, King of *Persia*, to rebuild the Temple and Walls of *Jerusalem*; which he accordingly effected, and according to the Prophecy in troublous Times.

Now

Now tho' it be very remarkable, and well worth our Notice, that there should be found, by any fair Method of Calculation, just four Hundred and ninety Years (or seventy Weeks of Years) between Jesus and the Going forth of the Commandment to rebuild *Jerusalem* : Yet it must be here observed, that the principal Use, we now make of it, is, That it fully accounts for the Expectation that the *Jews* had of a Messiah promised at, or near a particular Time, which was the Point proposed to be explained.

But what confirms this farther, is another Passage in the Prophecy of the Prophet *Haggai*, that fixeth the Coming of the Messiah in such a Manner, as that it could be delay'd a very little beyond the Time settled in the Prophecy of *Daniel*, which we have explained. The Words are as follow : * *For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the Heavens and the Earth, and the Sea, and the dry Land ; and I will shake all Nations, and the Desire of all Nations shall come, and I will fill this House with*

* Haggai ii. 6.

Glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The Silver is mine, and the Gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts; the Glory of this latter House shall be greater than the Glory of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts, and in this Place will I give Peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.

Here it is very manifest that the Coming of the Messiah was peremptorily fixed to happen before the Destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, which was standing, when this Prophet wrote. For, as, by the Desire of all Nations, all have ever understood the Messiah, so this Desire of all Nations was from this Prophecy peremptorily to come to that Temple which was standing when this Prophet Haggai wrote; and he was, by his Presence in it, to add to the Glory of it: *The Desire of all Nations shall come, and I will fill this House with Glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Since then the Coming of the Messiah was by this Prophet fixed to the latter Temple of the Jews, it could not properly be delay'd beyond the Time fixed in the Prophecy of Daniel (which hath been explained)

explained) because, shortly after that Time, that latter Temple was destroy'd. The *First*, which was called *Solomon's Temple*, was destroy'd by *Nebuchadnezzar*; and on the thirty-seventh Year from the Death of *Jesus*, according to the express Words of *Daniel's Prophecy*, *Titus*, the *Roman Emperor*, was *the Prince who came and destroyed to the Ground the City and Sanctuary*; the City of *Jerusalem* and the Temple. It appeareth therefore very manifest, from the remarkable Concurrence of these two Prophecies, that the Coming of the Messiah was fixed to a particular Time, beyond which, it could not be delay'd, which was the first Point to be proved.

SECT.

S E C T. XIII.

Shewing that, as Jesus declared himself to be this extraordinary Person, so he gave the fullest and strongest Proofs that could be desired, that he was the promised Messiah. In which the Evidence is examined which ariseth from his Fulfilling the other Prophecies which foretold the Messiah.

L E T us proceed to examine the next Particular, *viz.* That, as Jesus declared, that he was this Person, the promised Messiah, so he gave the fullest and strongest Proofs that could be desired that he was the Messiah, the Prince, whose Coming was fixed in the Prophecy of *Daniel*; and the *Desire of all Nations* promised in that of the Prophet *Haggai*.

The Proofs that he gave, that he was the promised Messiah, may be reduced to,
First, *The Prophecies which he fulfilled.*

N

Secondly,

Secondly, *The Miracles which he wrought.*

Thirdly, *The Doctrines which he taught.*

Fourthly, *The Accomplishment of the Prophecies which he foretold.* And,

Fifthly, *His Raising himself from the Dead.*

Supposing any Person to be sent from God, What other, or greater Proofs can he be supposed to give that he was sent? Than,

First, His Answering the Descriptions given of him by God, before his Coming.

Secondly, That the Power of God should shew forth itself in him, by his Commanding and Controuling the Works of Nature, and the Laws by which the Creation is governed, which none but the Creator can do.

Thirdly, That the Knowledge of God, by which he foresees future Events, should fully appear to be in him, by the Accomplishment of Things foretold by him.

Fourthly, That his Doctrine and Works be such, as evidently promote the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind.

Fuller

Fuller and stronger Proofs than these, that any Person is sent from God, cannot be imagined ; and that Jesus gave these Proofs is manifest : For, *First*, as to his Answering the Descriptions given of the Messiah, nothing can be plainer.

We have already seen, that the Time of the Messiah's Coming was foretold, and fell-in with the Time in which Jesus appeared in the World : But the very Place also where the Messiah should be born was foretold. When *Herod* had gathered all the Chief Priests, and Scribes, and the People of *Jerusalem* together, * to enquire of them, where Christ was to be born, he no sooner asked the Question, but they all answer, that *he was to come out of Bethlehem*. The Prophecy, they had always agreed on as fixing this Point, is in the vth Chapter of *Micah* : *But thou Bethlehem Ephrata, tho' thou be little among the Thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose Goings forth have been from of Old, from Everlasting*. Accordingly when *Herod* the

† Matt. ii. 4.

King had gathered all the Chief Priests, and Scribes, and People of *Jerusalem* together,* he demanded of them *where Christ should be born*; and they said unto him, in *Bethlehem of Judea*, for thus it is written by the Prophet (*Micah*) *And thou Bethlehem, in the Land of Judah, art not the least among the Princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my People Israel.*

The promised Messiah, then, was to be born at *Bethlehem*. Where was Jesus born? His Parents and all their Friends and Relations lived in *Nazareth*, a Town in *Galilee*, a Place far distant from *Bethlehem*. But we find, that, by the most eminent Interposition of the Providence of God, particular Care was taken, and a very extraordinary Occasion given to his being born at *Bethlehem*; an Occasion which affected, in some Degree, the whole inhabited World, which was then under the Power of the Romans. For, *there went out a Decree from Augustus Cæsar, that all the*

* Matt. ii. 3.

World should be taxed ; and all went to be taxed every one to his own City ; and Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the City of Nazareth into Judea, unto the City of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of that Family) with Mary his Wife, being great with Child, and, during their Stay there, was Jesus born.

As to other more minute Descriptions of the Messiah, there is not much Occasion for Enlarging on them here. What Part of that remarkable Prophecy, * which *Isaiah* giveth, doth not eminently agree to Jesus ? Was the Messiah to make his Grave with the Wicked, and with the Rich in his Death ? When he was crucified between two Thieves, Did he not make his Grave with the Wicked ? Was not this to be numbered with Transgressors ? When *Joseph* of *Arimathea*, an honourable Counsellor (as he is called) begged his Body, and laid it in his own Tomb, Was not this to find his Grave with the Rich ? Was he to be a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief ? Was

* Chap liii.

† Matt. xxviii, 57.

ever Sorrow like unto his Sorrow, with which it pleased the Lord to afflict him? Was the Messiah to be despised and rejected of Men? How eminently hath this been exemplify'd in Jesus? *They hid, as it were, their Faces from him, they despised, they esteemed him not. Who hath believed our Report, and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?*

Was not the xxiid Psalm ever understood by the Jews to be a Prophecy of the Messiah crucified? *They pierced my Hands and my Feet, I may tell all my Bones, they stand staring and looking upon me; they part my Garments among them, and cast Lots upon my Vesture.* Was not the Crucifying of Jesus, the Suspending him on the Cross (by Nails drove through his Hands and his Feet) in such Manner, that you might tell all his Bones?

They parted my Garments among them, and cast Lots upon my Vesture. Behold the Soldiers, who claimed a Right to his Raiment, dividing one Part into four, and casting Lots for another: *The Coat being without*

without Seam, they said, Let us not rend it, but cast Lots for it.

Thus it is manifest, that the Descriptions given of the Time and Place of the Messiah's Birth, and other Circumstances of his Ministry, Death, and Sufferings eminently agreed to, and were accomplished in Jesus.

The first Mark therefore of the Messiah is found in him, *viz.* He answered the Descriptions given of the Messiah before his Coming.

S E C T. XIV.

In which the Evidence is examined, that ariseth from the Miracles which Jesus wrought: Shewing that the first Condition, that should attend all Miracles, took Place in those wrought by Jesus, viz. that they should be so repeated, so publick, and so evident to Numbers, as to leave no Doubt.

LET us proceed to the second Proof that Jesus gave, that he was sent of God, viz. that the Power of God should shew forth itself in him, by his Commanding and Controuling the Works of Nature, and the Laws by which the Creation is governed. This is in other Words his having the Power of working Miracles, the Ground of which Power stands thus: None but God, who made the World, can govern and direct it; now for the Direction of it, and the Keeping its wonderful Frame, in that beautiful Order which
appears

appears in it, he has given the several Parts of the Creation such Qualities and Powers, as necessarily operate on, and produce in each other, certain constant Effects, and all wonderfully conspire to keep every Part, and the whole Frame of the visible World, in one constant Order and regular Course.

Now, tho' we don't know all the Powers of Things natural, or how far they may go, yet we know well what is contradictory to those Powers of Nature, which we are acquainted with; and wherever we find Effects, evident to our Senses, and wonderfully contrary to the known Laws by which Nature is governed, Mankind have ever agreed that such Effects (under certain Limitations) must proceed from the Power of God, and that the Person, who produces such Effects, must be commissioned by him; I say under certain Limitations, for tho' (for Example) by the known Laws of Nature, the Body of a living Man necessarily sinks in Water, and it is naturally impossible, that any Man should walk on the Surface of that Element; yet if a Man should declare,

declare, that he is commissioned immediately by God, to teach Mankind his Will, and, in Proof of it, we should see him walk on the Surface of Water, without sinking, tho' this would really be a great Miracle, yet it alone would not be sufficient to prove him sent by God; for there are other Conditions necessary to the Proving of this Point, and they are these, *viz.*

First, That the Wonders should be wrought, not in a single Instance or two, but so repeated, so publick, and so evident, to Numbers that are Witnesses of them, as to leave no Doubt.

Secondly, That the Doctrines taught (by the Person who works these Wonders) should all manifestly tend to promote the Good of all Mankind, and the Glory of God; and the Reason of these Limitations is exceedingly well grounded, for tho', in the general, we know well what is a Miracle (what is contrary to the known Laws of Nature) yet, in a single particular Fact, our Senses may be grossly imposed upon; on this Account, therefore,

to

to secure Men from Error, the Wonder wrought must be repeated publicly, in the Face of the World, and the Witnesses many: And then for the other Condition, *viz.* That the Doctrine taught be such, as manifestly tends to promote the Good of all Mankind, and the Glory of God, this is indispensably necessary; because it is impossible, that we can be so sure of any Thing of this Nature by the Evidence of our Senses, as we are by the Evidence of our Reason, that God is good and true, and consequently that every Doctrine, that comes from him, must be so too; that is, it must tend to promote the Good of Mankind, and the Glory of the eternal God.

Thus we see from Reason, and the Nature of the Thing, that Miracles are to be admitted as Proofs of a divine Mission under certain Limitations and Conditions, and the sacred Scriptures say the same Thing; for both the Old and New Testament suppose and affirm, that Miracles (or what may be thought such) may be wrought by Impostors. * *Moses* plainly

* Deut. xiii. 1—6.

supposes, that a false Prophet (one who would set himself to draw Mankind into Idolatry) might appear, at least, to have the Power of working Miracles. Thus we read ; *If there arise among you a Prophet, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass, whereof he speaks unto thee, saying, Let us go after other Gods ; thou shalt not hearken to the Words of that Prophet : He shall be put to Death.* Jesus also tells us, * *That there shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets, and shall shew great Signs and Wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very Elect.* The Condition, therefore, just now mentioned, must of Necessity take Place in those Miracles, that are to be admitted as Proofs of any Person's being sent by God ; and that they take Place in the Miracles wrought by Jesus is most evident : For, *First*, whosoever knows any Thing, of the History of what he did, must know, that all Accounts agree, that his whole Ministry was

* Matth. xxiv. 24.

a Series of Wonders; that they were done, in the most publick Manner, in the Presence of Multitudes, in Places of the greatest Concourse, for three Years and a half together : That, with the Speaking of a Word, he gave Eyes to the Blind, Ears to the Deaf, Feet to the Lame, Health and Strength to the Sick and Weak, and even Life to the Dead. When he multiplied the few Loaves and Fishes, so immensely, at one Time there were present above four Thousand Witnesses, who were fed by them ; and, at another, above five Thousand ; When he raised the Widow's Son to Life at *Nain*, * it was done in the Presence of a Crowd that were in Procession attending the dead Body to the Grave ; he brought many People with him to the City, and met many coming out with the Widow and the Funeral. When he raised *Lazarus* to Life after Lying four Days in the Grave, many of the *Jews* were at the House of *Martha* in *Bethany*, and were present at the Grave, when,

* Luke vii.

with

with a Word speaking, a Man that had been dead four Days came to Life. The Gospel History affirms,* that the Number of Wonders which he wrought was so great, that there was no Recounting them all ; and indeed it appears from all Accounts that we can trace, that they were so many and great, that they extorted some Acknowledgment, even from his bitterest Enemies. None, even of those who renounced him, ever denied, or disputed this ; nay, they all have acknowledged, that the Wonders were done ; but as the *Jews* maintained that he cast out Devils by *Beelzebub* the Prince of the Devils ; so all the Enemies of his Mission always allow'd the Miracles to be wrought, but suggested that he performed them by Collusion with Evil Spirits : Nay at last, the very *Jewish Sanhedrim* seem to have stagger'd by the Number and Greatness of his Miracles : For, when they found in what Manner he had restored *Lazarus* to Life, we are told that the *Chief Priests*

* John xxi.

and Pharisees gather'd a Council and said, What do we? For this Man doth many Miracles; if we let him alone, all Men will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away both our Place and Nation.

And we cannot omit Observing, that, when Jesus and the Apostles were before the Chief Priests and Rulers as Criminals, we hear not a Word of questioning the Miracles, or of any Charge of Imposture; but on the contrary, when the *Sanhedrim* saw, that the same Power of working Miracles remained with the Apostles, we find a Man of Learning, a Member of their Council, and of Reputation among them, fairly suggesting to them, when they were bent upon putting the Apostles to Death, that the Doctrine which they taught, and Works which they wrought, *might be from God* *, and from thence he forms an Argument to persuade them to let them alone. *Refrain from these Men*, said he, *and let them alone; for, if this Counsel or*

* Acts v.

*this Work be of Men, it will come to Nought;
 but, if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it,
 lest haply ye be found even to fight against
 God; and to him they agreed, and when
 they had called the Apostles, and beaten
 them, they commanded that they should
 not speak in the Name of Jesus, and let
 them go.*

SECT.

S E C T. XV.

Shewing that the moral Doctrines, which Jesus taught; all manifestly tend to promote the Happiness of Mankind, and the Glory of God. In which they are compared with those taught by the Heathens.

THAT the Doctrines, which Jesus taught, all remarkably tend to promote the Happiness of Mankind, and consequently the Glory of God, is so evident of all the moral Precepts of Christianity, that it is allow'd of by its bitterest Enemies. The greatest of all Infidels, who have appeared in Print, maintains that Christianity is as old as the Creation. And what is his Meaning? Nothing else but this, *viz.* That its moral Doctrines are the Laws of Nature, which were ever discoverable by the proper Use of that Reason with which Mankind was

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endued:

endued: And is not the End of all these Laws of Nature allow'd, on all Hands, to be the Promoting and Securing the true Happiness of Mankind? This, therefore, is agreed, and need not be enlarged on; it may be necessary, however, to point out those remarkable Instances, in which Christianity refined Morality to as great an Height of Perfection as the Philosophers, the Teachers of the Heathen World, had debased and corrupted it. Doth not Jesus, in his first Discourses on the Mount, manifestly shew such an eminent Superiority to all the Teachers of Morality that had gone before him, as, to an ingenuous Mind, at once strongly intimates him more than Man, and a Teacher sent from God? Instead of the endless Contradictions and Corruptions, which took Place in all the moral Doctrines and Practices of the Heathen World, you find him at once clearly settling all Morality on two grand Foundations, namely, *The Imitation of God, and universal Benevolence to all Mankind, even to our Enemies.* *Be ye perfect as your Father*

Father in Heaven is perfect. If you love them that love you, What Reward have you, Do not even the Publicans the same? But I say unto you, Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do Good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven; for he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust.

What Divine, what God-like Sublimity and Perfection at once exalt this Doctrine above all that was ever heard of in the World? Did the admirable Genius of Cicero, that ranfack'd all the Philosophy that went before him, deliver or discover any Thing like this? And have any of our exquisite Delineators of Morality found out any other, or better Foundations than these? They think to rise upon the Ruins of Christianity, while they plunder it, and enrich themselves with its Magnificence, whilst they pretend to despise it.

Seneca indeed, and *Persius*, *Epietetus*, *Juvenal*, *Plutarch*, and *Antoninus* the Emperor, have some excellent Strains of Morality, refined beyond what is found in the Writings of Heathen Moralists before the Reign of *Tiberius*: But all these wrote after the *Light to lighten the Gentiles* had shone out upon the World; after the Preaching of Jesus, and the Writings of his Apostles, had gone out into many Lands, and their Words to the Ends of the then known World. Where, or by whom, before Jesus, was universal Love and Benevolence towards all Mankind made the first Principle, and the distinguishing Mark of a Disciple? Nothing could breathe or dictate such Strains of Divine Love, as the Gospel requires in its Professors, but the Spirit of that God, who is *Love itself*. *God is Love!* and he, that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God. Where, or by whom, before Jesus, was the Necessity of Forgiving Injuries put in such a Light? That we must forgive one another, if we hope to be forgiven of God. That we must not return Evil with Evil, but rather with good Offices:

2

That

That we must not only be distinguished by Degrees of Virtue above the common Practice of Men, but that we must make the Perfection of God the Standard we are to imitate, that, by the transcendent Excellence of the Original, the Copy may have as much Worth, as it is capable of. By whom, before Jesus, was the inward Purity of the Mind and Heart insisted on as necessary to our being happy in the Presence of God, both in this World and in the next? And, to mention no more, Who before Jesus deliver'd a Precept tending to such Purity, as that which commands us, to *abstain from all Appearance* of Evil; or one so nicely instructive, so universally useful, so easy, and so wonderfully comprehensive of the whole Duty of Man to Man, as that heavenly Rule, *viz. Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them?* No Wonder that his first Discourses astonished those that heard them; and that Doctrines of such sublime Perfection and Purity extorted that Confession, even from the Officers, who were

sent to apprehend him, viz. * *Never Man spake as this Man spake.*

But I observ'd, that Jesus improved and refined Morality, as much as the Teachers of the Heathen World had debased and corrupted it. Let us see in what Instances these Corruptions took Place.

First, As to the Notions they had of the Deity, the Foundation of all Religion: What is more notoriously known, than the monstrous Composition of Impieties, which the Doctrine of the Pagan World concerning their many Gods was made up of?

How hideous, how overturning of the Foundations of all Religion, was the Theology even of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, those polite and most refin'd Improvers of Arts and Arms, that ever liv'd in the World? What Numbers of Gods did they believe and worship? And what horrid Notions did they frame of them all? *Jupiter*, their supreme God, was distinguished by nothing more than a Superiority in Wickedness; and there is

* John vii. 46.

scarce a Vice which had not its peculiar Patron among their Deities. Deceit and Fraud had its *Mercury*, Drunkenness *Bacchus*, Lust had its *Venus*, Revenge its *Nemesis*, and the Love of Blood and War, and Destruction, its *Mars* and *Bellona*.

Whole Sects, even of their Philosophers, by Denying of the Providence and Omniscience of God, are allow'd, by that Opinion, to have effectually overturn'd the very Notion of his Being, the great Foundation of all Religion; whilst another, the celebrated Sect of the Stoicks, by maintaining the Doctrine of Fate (that all Men act by Necessity, and not by Choice, by taking away the Freedom of Men's Will) left not the least Room or Handle for any Man's being virtuous or vicious, or any Colour of Ground to expect a future State of Rewards and Punishments.

Then as to their Manner of Divine Worship (beside that Idolatry universally took Place among them) the Offering up even of human Sacrifices is found to have been given into, at Times, by most

of the Pagan Nations, if not by all. *They offered even their Sons and their Daughters unto Devils ; they shed innocent Blood, even the Blood of their Sons and their Daughters.* And this, to their Idols, to Stocks and Stones ; which dreadful Practices even the *Jews* learn'd from those Heathens, among whom they liv'd.

Words cannot sufficiently express the dreadful State of these Things among them : That Temples should be erected to *Venus* and to *Flora*, in which not only the Priestesses were Strumpets, but the religious Rites were Prostitution, and all Kinds of Uncleaness : And this was the Case also of the *Bacchanals*, with the Addition of Drunkenness, and the wildest Extravagancies and Madness, even in the Women, who (as well as Men) constantly assisted at those Rites. In a Word, what was called religious Worship over the Face of the whole Earth, if you except the small Spot which was inhabited by the *Jews*, was such a monstrous and hideous Composition of Profaneness and Blasphemy against the very Name of God ;

it was so much the Overturning of the great Foundations of all Religion and Morality ; that, if the Devil had the Prescribing of Religion in many Instances, it could not be worse. And it will ever remain a standing Monument of the Weakness and Insufficiency of human Reason for the Work of Religion :

For the Reproach of those Men, who renounce the glorious Sun-shine of Revelation, to follow the weak Glimmerings of natural Reason.

Thus much for the Knowledge, which the Heathens had of God, and the Methods of serving him.

When these were the Notions even of their Philosophers, What must have been the Case of the Bulk of Mankind, of the Illiterate, the Thoughtless, and the Vicious, who would not, or could not, reason about such Things?

Even the uncertain and contradictory Opinions of the Philosophers could reach but to very few, *viz.* To the Studious and to the Men of Letters ; but, as for the Bulk of Mankind, they must generally have been

been quite ignorant, and without any Thought of such Matters.

But beside, that the Heathen were ignorant of the most important Truths relating to God, and their Duty to him, we observed, that they were fallen also into desperate Errors in Relation to Morality, and the Duties of Men to one another.

Thus as to the Freedom of Men's Wills (the great Foundation of all Morality) the most celebrated Sect of Philosophers among them (the Stoicks) maintained the monstrous Principle, that Men's Actions are govern'd, not by their own Wills, but by an irresistible Fatality ; which was so fundamentally Overturning of all that could be called Virtue and Morality, that, upon such a Principle, to talk of Duty or Obligation was Nothing less than Contradiction and Nonsense.

Many among them also maintain'd the desperate Position, that there is not in the Nature of Things any Difference between Vice and Virtue ; that they depend on the Laws and the Customs of every Country. In short, that there is, in Reality, no
such

such Thing as Vice and Virtue ; but that Fashion and the Power of Law-givers may make Murder a Virtue, and Justice a Crime.

Beside these fundamental Errors, destructive of all Morality, they were engag'd in many particular ones of a shocking Nature : Thus the Destroying of Infants, when maim'd, or defective, or the Exposing them to be devour'd by wild Beasts, or to perish by Hunger and Cold, was justify'd by *Plato*, and practis'd at *Athens*, the politest and most learned Republick in *Greece* ; nay, it was establish'd by the Laws of the two most famous Law-givers, viz. *Lycurgus* and *Solon*, Theft was encourag'd at *Sparta*, a State which set up for great Strictness of Manners ; the Marrying one's Sister, by the half Blood, was held honourable among some of the *Grecians* ; and, among the *Perſian Magi*, it was not only lawful, but reputable for a Man to marry his Father's Wife.

The Stoicks not only gave into all Obscenity of Speech, but justify'd it upon
Prin-

Principle : As did also the *Cynicks*, who allow'd themselves in the Committal of the most brutal Actions in Publick, in the Face of the World.

If these were the Principles and Practices of their Philosophers, the learned and studious Teachers among them, What must have been the Looseness both of Principle and Practice in the Unletter'd and Ignorant, which always make the Bulk of Mankind?

Instead then of the grossest and most monstrous Errors, in Relation to God, and the Manner of worshipping him, we have now, through the whole Tenour of Sacred Writ, Notions given us of him, so suitable, so worthy of God ; such noble and sublime Conceptions are suggested concerning the Unity, the Purity, the Goodness, the Power, the Wisdom, the Justice, and boundless Perfection of his Nature, as no Being, but himself, could communicate to us,

Instead of their many absurd and un-pure Rites, which were admitted into, and made Parts of their religious Worship: In-
stead

stead of their Sacrifices of human Bodies, of their Sons and their Daughters unto Devils, Men are immediately commanded to worship nothing but the one true God, and him only *to serve* : And how must he be worshiped? As he is a Spirit, that is, a Being of the greatest Purity, so he will be *worshiped only in Spirit and in Truth* : He will allow none to be true Worshipers of him, who worship him in any other Way, than with the Prayers and Praises of sincere and honest Hearts.

Instead of the greatest Doubts and Uncertainties, even in their wise Men (who most favour'd the Opinion) concerning the Immortality of their Souls, the blessed Christ Jesus, *Emmanuel* or God with us, has set Life and Immortality in as clear a Light, as could possibly be consistent with the Freedom of Men's Will ; for certainly to give Men ocular Demonstration of the Rewards of the Righteous, and the Punishments of the Damn'd, would be a Forcing of all Men, bad as well as good, into Heaven ; it would be the Destroying

stroying the Liberty of Men's Will, and consequently the Destruction of Virtue.

Thro' the whole Tenour of the Gospel, God has given us as full a Knowledge of the other World, as, perhaps, we are now capable of receiving ; or, at least, as much as is sufficient to influence honest and sincere Hearts, and such only, God propos'd to draw to himself : Whilst every Thing that is there deliver'd concerning the future State, a Resurrection, a final Judgment, the Happiness of good Men, and the Misery of the Wicked, is conceived in Terms so just and suitable, so plain, and yet so majestic ; so unaffected and modest, and yet so raised and agreeable to the Dignity of the Subject, as might alone prove the Sacred Scriptures (to an ingenuous Mind) to be of divine Original.

Instead of a general Ignorance, as to the first Principles of their Duty, and the grossest Errors even among the wisest of them, subversive, as we have shewn them to be, of all Morality and Religion.

Instead

Instead of many Crimes being not only allow'd, but justified and establish'd, in their politest States, and by the wisest of their Philosophers; we have, from the Doctrine and Example of Jesus, such a System of Precepts, and Commands of so refined and consummate Purity and Perfection, that Angels may copy and improve by: And indeed such as could never be the Invention of so impure and so weak a Creature as Man is, but must necessarily derive their Original only from the pure and perfect God.

Finally, Instead of being universally the Objects of God's Vengeance in this World, and in the next: Instead of *being Aliens and Enemies, and without God in the World*, if we sincerely endeavour to live, as becomes the Gospel of Christ, we find our Condition changed from the very Worst to the Best: Through the one Oblation of Christ once offer'd, we find, that not only our Sins are pardon'd, but that we are very Members incorporated of that glorious Society of which Christ is the Head. We find ourselves Fellow-Citizens

zens of the glorious City of God, the New *Jerusalem* which is above ; we find ourselves Denizens or Freemen of Heaven ; Servants of the Household, Children of the Family of God, Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ, and of the glorious Inheritance of the Saints in Light.

SECT.

S E C T. XVI.

In which it is examined, Whether the peculiar Doctrines of Christianity be worthy of God ; and whether they tend to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind?

LET us now see, Whether the speculative peculiar Doctrines of Christianity be worthy of God, and whether they have a natural Tendency to promote the Happiness of Mankind? These are, *First*, that the one eternal God was united to the human Body, and the human Soul of the Man Christ Jesus.

Secondly, That the human Body, and the human Soul, to which the Deity was united, was given up a Sacrifice, a Propitiation for the Sins of Mankind.

Thirdly, That Christ Jesus is appointed Judge of all Mankind, at the great Day of Recompence and Reward.

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First,

First, As to the Point that the one eternal God was united to the human Body, and the human Soul of the Man Christ Jesus : What is there in it, that to fair unprejudic'd Reason can appear in any Sort unworthy of God ?

Christ Jesus is declared * to be God manifest in the Flesh, and that in him dwelt all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily. †

What is there in this repugnant or contradictory to the Principles of Reason ? That God should unite himself to a human Body, as to the *Shechinah* in the *Jewish* Temple, or the Fire on Mount *Sinai*, and in and through that exhibit, to Mankind, his boundless Power, Goodness, and Knowledge ? Is there any Thing in this shocking to human Understanding ? So far from it, that the Union of the human Body to the human Soul hath (as far as we can judge) as much of Difficulty to our Reason, because both are to us intirely inconceivable ; we can no more comprehend the Manner of the one, than

* 1 Tim. iii, 16.

† Col. ii. 9.

of the other. And is not this the Case of every Thing we see and feel? That Things are so, we evidently know; but why, or how they are so, in how few Instances can we satisfy ourselves? What is there in Things natural, the intimate Nature of which our stunted Understandings comprehend? Do we know how the Parts of any Pebble, that lies before us, are united to each other?

The Union of God to Jesus Christ is indeed with Regard to the amazing Goodness and Condescension of God, that appears in it, infinitely wonderful: But, with Regard to the Power of God, the Union of our Souls to our Bodies has in it as much of Difficulty, as there is not the least Colour of Repugnancy in the one or the other.

The Body and the Soul are two Beings, as different in their Natures, as the Angel and the Brute, and yet united by the Power of the Creator; the intelligent or rational, and the sensitive or animal Soul, make one Man, nay one Person: Can we look upon this as having Nothing wonderful

derful in it, and at the same Time apprehend Repugnancy in the Union of the Divine to the human Nature? The single Question in this Case is, *viz.* Whether the boundless Power, and Knowledge, and Goodness of God, was fully manifested in Jesus? If so, What reasonable Doubt can remain, that, as the great Apostle speaks to the *Colossians*, the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him? And, as to the Manner of the Union, it is out of our Sphere, our Understandings have Nothing to do with such Subjects in our present State. Is there any Thing in this Dispensation unworthy of God? Or rather, Doth not Glory to God in the Highest result from it, as well as it tends to promote Peace and all Good among Men? Doth not the tender Regard of the Creator for his lost Creatures wonderfully shine forth in it? That he should exhibit himself among them in such a Manner, for so gracious an End? To recover them from the basest Degeneracy and Corruption, and to
 restore

restore them to a Capacity of being happy now, and for ever.

If the human Race be thought inconsiderable and unworthy that such Wonders should be wrought for their Sakes, the more unworthy we are supposed, Doth not the gracious Goodness, the boundless Mercy, the Glory of God shine forth the more resplendent? But who can think, that the eternal Happiness of Millions of Millions of intelligent Beings is a Thing inconsiderable? Or rather, Who can think of it, in any other Light than that of its being an Object intirely worthy of the peculiar Care of the eternal God? And doth not this Point, of God manifested in human Nature, tend to promote the Good and Happiness of Mankind? Must it not necessarily give them strong Impressions of the Dignity of their own Nature, that has been honoured in so distinguished a Manner by the supreme God? Must not this have a Tendency to set them above the Baseness that is in all Sin? Must not it put the dreadful Corruption, the Misery

and desperate Nature of all Wickedness, in the strongest Light, to reflect, that the Recovery of Mankind from it made it necessary, that the eternal God should manifest himself among them united to human Nature? Hath not this Point a manifest Tendency to rouse and awaken Men from the Lethargy of Sin, to exert themselves in the Ways of Virtue, when they reflect, that their Creator has exhibited himself among them, united to their Nature, to give them all the Helps, Advantages, and Encouragements, to make themselves virtuous and happy, that, as free Creatures, they are capable of receiving? What can tend to promote the Happiness of Men, and the Glory of God, if this does not?

But let us see whether there be any Thing unworthy of God in the other great Point of Doctrine peculiar to Christianity, *viz.* That the human Body, and human Soul, to which the Deity was united, was given up a Sacrifice, a Propitiation for the Sins of Mankind?

In order to conceive of this Matter in a proper Light, it must be observ'd, that the Notion and Practice of propitiatory Sacrifices had, by all Accounts, from the earliest Times, universally prevailed among Men. Whether it had its Original from the express Command of God, or whether it was the Dictate of human Reason, we shall not now enquire; but the Fact is allow'd on all Hands: Whencesoever then it had its Original, the Principle on which it was grounded is plain, *viz.* That the Giving up of the Life of the Victim sacrificed was in the Stead of the Life of the Person that offer'd it up, and was an Acknowledgment that the Person sacrificing had forfeited his Life by Sin, and deserved to be deprived of it; and this humble and solemn Acknowledgment was supposed to have some Efficacy to appease the Author and Dispenser of Life and Death. This being a Notion and Practice universally prevailing, and being grounded in some Reason, God might for the wisest Purposes proceed upon it, in order the more effectually to engage Mankind to come

in to him, by making what was to be of positive Institution in Religion to be grounded in Notions and Practices that had already obtained among them. Thus a great Part of the *Mosaick* Dispensation rose on this Foundation, and the only positive Institutions, which Jesus established, were Baptism and the Eucharist, which were both founded on Customs which had obtained among the *Jews*. Things standing thus, the Creator, the supreme Governor and Lawgiver of the World, sees Mankind lost, and abandoned to the foulest Degeneracy and Corruption: In his boundless Mercy, he resolves to restore them to a Capacity of being virtuous and for ever happy. He resolves to fix a Method for receiving this lost Race to Grace and Pardon, but then it must be in a Way, in which the supreme Lawgiver and Governor of the World may most effectually testify to Men, and all intelligent Beings, the detestable Baseness, and desperate Malignity of Sin, and sufficiently vindicate the Honour of his Laws and his Government, which had been so shamefully

shamefully overturned and trampled on by Mankind. Rebels are not to be received to Mercy and Favour but upon proper Terms, and Satisfaction made. The Creator therefore, in his boundless Wisdom and Goodness, fixes a Method to answer these great Ends. Proceeding on the universally prevailing Notion of propitiatory Sacrifices ; he ordains that one Life of infinite Worth, and inestimable Value, should be accepted in the Stead of the Lives of all Mankind, which they had all forfeited by their Crimes. The eternal God ordains, that Jesus Christ should at a proper Time appear in the World, and the Fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, he should teach Mankind all that they were to know and do, in order to their being truly Virtuous and Happy in this World, and that which must last for ever. He must free Morality and Religion from all the foul Abuses and Corruptions which had overturned and reversed them, and carry them to the greatest Height of Refinement and Perfection : Having done this, it is ordained, that the
 Body

Body and Soul of Jesus, to which the Deity was united, should be the great propitiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole World ; as he speaks himself,* the Son of Man came to give his Life a Ransom for many, a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World.

† He bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree ;** he lov'd us, and gave himself for us an Offering, a Sacrifice to God. Here then is the Ground of this wonderful Dispensation, that a Person of such infinite Dignity, and perfect Innocence, should suffer for the Sins of lost Mankind. The Scheme was calculated, at once, to display, in the strongest Light, the boundless Love of God to Mankind, and his infinite Hatred and Detestation of Sin. His Hatred to Sin, in requiring so wonderful a Ransom to purchase Pardon for sincerely repenting Sinners ; and his boundless Love to Mankind, in providing the wonderful Ransom for us. And is there any Thing in this

* Matt. xx. 28. † 1 Pet. ii. 24.

** Eph. v. 2.

Dispensation unworthy of God ? Or rather, Doth not his boundless Mercy, his Love to Mankind, his gracious Goodness, his Wisdom, as the supreme Lawgiver and Governor of the World, appear most gloriously illustrated by it ? Does it not all manifestly tend to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of all Mankind ? And can it be reasonably deem'd any Lessening of the boundless Goodness that shines forth in this Dispensation, that an innocent Person suffer'd instead of the Guilty ? Did not the blessed Jesus expressly declare, that the Sacrifice of himself had its Rise from himself, that it was intirely voluntary, a Free-will Offering : *No one, said he,* taketh my Life from me, but I lay it down of myself ; I have Power to lay it down, and I have Power to take it up again.* Where then can there be the least Colour of Imputation of Injustice on this blessed Scheme of our Redemption from Sin and eternal Misery ? Was not the Son of God free to offer himself ? And what was

* John x.

there,

there, but boundless Love and Wisdom, in the supreme Governor and Lawgiver of the World accepting of this Ransom, and receiving to Mercy and Pardon, upon these Terms, the Rebel Race of Mankind, upon their Return to their Obedience? These seem to be the two great Points of Doctrine peculiar to the Christian Religion: That the same Jesus should be our Mediator and Intercessor with God, and at the last great Day our Judge: Is it not all worthy of God, tending to promote the Good of Mankind, and the Glory of the Creator?

First, Doth not the Mercy and Goodness of God to Mankind appear to the greatest Advantage conspicuous in this, that the very same Person who offered up himself a Sacrifice for us, to rescue us from the Power of Sin and eternal Misery, is the Person appointed to be the universal Judge, who is to determine the eternal Fate of all Mankind to endless Happiness, or endless Misery? Such is the transcendent Goodness of God to us in this Affair, that, if every one of us was to chuse a Judge

Judge for himself, could his Heart wish for any other than the one already appointed? Could any of us desire a better Judge than our dearest and greatest Benefactor? He so lov'd us, when we were in the sorest Distress, and desperately undone, as to give himself a Ransom for us. Must it not be a Matter of great Joy and Comfort, to the humble and truly repentant Sinner, that he is to have one for his Judge, who will make all the merciful Allowances for his Defects, Failings, and Infirmities, that, consistent with Justice, his Case will possibly admit of? To make Provision for the Defects and involuntary Failings of human Nature, is declared to be one great Design of the Gospel, and of our Redeemer's taking our Nature upon him. This is what the Apostle to the *Hebrews* has told us: *For in all Things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People.*

Who can have Compassion on the Ignorant, and on them that are out of the Way, for that

that he himself also was compassed with Infirmities; for we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched, with the Feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin.

What truly repentant Sinner can desire any other Judge, than he who is, by his Office, his merciful Mediator and Intercessor, for Pardon? And may he not, with the greatest Comfort and Joy of Heart, assure himself, that such a Judge, a Mediator and Intercessor, will be as merciful as is possibly consistent with Justice? A Judge that is infallible, free from all Possibility of Error, and perfectly knowing in all the minutest Circumstances of his Case. What is there in all this, that doth not promote the Glory of God, and the Good of all Mankind?

S E C T. XVII.

*In which is examined the Evidence that
aristeth from the Fulfilling of Prophecies
foretold by Jesus.*

HAVING made it appear, that the Doctrines, which Jesus taught, were all worthy of God, and tend to his Glory and the Good of all Mankind : We come now to the fourth Proof that Jesus was a Teacher sent from God, *viz.* That the Knowledge of God, by which he foresees future Events, appeared in him, by the Accomplishment of Things foretold by him.

The Foretelling of Things to come has ever been allow'd, by the common Sense of all Mankind, under the already mentioned Limitations, to be a Proof of a Person's being sent by God ; and the Ground of this is plain ; for natural Reason suggests that God foresees all Things that
are

are to come, and assures us that he only can foresee them.

That natural Reason suggests that God foresees future Events, is plain from the Writings of the Heathen: *Cicero* lays it down as a Thing granted (*Deos posse nobis Signa futurarum Rerum ostendere*) That the Gods have it in their Power to signify to us future Events: And in another Place, *Quis non timeat cuncta providentem Deum?* Who would not fear a God that foresees all Things? And *Seneca*, speaking of the Fore-knowledge of God, *Nota est Diis Operis sui Series, omniumque Rerum per Manus suas futurarum Scientia, illis in aperto est.* The Gods are well acquainted with the Course of Effects that will be produced in the World, that they have made, and the Knowledge of all Events, that will pass under their Direction, is manifest and open to them.

Now the Things standing thus, Who ever declares himself sent by God to teach Mankind his Will, and foretels future Events, if he puts it beyond all Doubt or Question that he did clearly foretel them
in

in several Instances, and if the Doctrines which he teacheth are all worthy of God, the Accomplishment of such Predictions, with the preceding Proofs, will ever be allow'd full Evidence that he was sent from God; that, as he must have his Knowledge, so he must have his Commission from the all-knowing God.

Now that this was the Case of Jesus, is most evident; he foretold his own Crucifixion and Resurrection; he foretold *Peter's* Denial of him; he foretold the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, and the speedy Propagation of his Gospel through the World. Now as it is beyond Doubt, that he clearly foretold these Things, and that they were most fully accomplished (as we have more particularly set forth in the xxth Section, to which we refer the Reader) and inasmuch as all the Doctrines he taught were worthy of God, he must be acknowledged to have herein given the fullest Proof that he was, what he declared himself to be, the Messiah

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And

And now I think impartial Reason must allow, that the Point we undertook is fully prov'd ; and that since the blessed Jesus exactly answer'd the Descriptions given of the Messiah in the Prophets ; since he fully shew'd that the Power of God resided in him, by his Commanding and Controuling the Laws by which the Creation is governed ; since the Knowledge of God appeared in him, by his Foretelling many future Events which were most remarkably accomplished ; and since all the Doctrines he taught were worthy of God, it necessarily follows, that the blessed Jesus was (what he declared himself to be) the Messiah sent from God.

S E C T.

S E C T. XVIII.

The Fifth Proof, that Jesus was a Teacher sent from God, viz. his Rising from the Dead.

THERE never was a Matter of Fact in any History called in Question, of the Truth of which there are such strong Proofs, and such Security against Fraud and Imposture in every Step of it, as in this of the Resurrection of Jesus. In order to make this appear, let us examine it Step by Step, through the whole Procedure of it:

First, As to the State of Things relating to the Resurrection, previous to the Crucifixion of Jesus.

Secondly, We will consider the Fact itself, and the Evidence which we have of the Resurrection.

Thirdly, We will consider what followed:

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First,

First, As to the State of Things regarding the Resurrection, previous to the Crucifixion of Jesus: The *First* Thing observable is, that Jesus gave the fullest Notice to his Enemies, that he would rise from the Dead the Third Day. This is manifest from the Application which the Chief Priests and Pharisees made to *Pilate*: They tell him, that they remembered that the Deceiver, as they called him, had said that he would rise from the Dead after three Days; they begg'd therefore, that he would order a Guard to take Charge of the Sepulchre, lest, as they said, his Disciples should come by Night and steal away the Body, and say he was risen from the Dead. *Pilate* accordingly order'd a Guard, and bid them make Things as sure as they could; so they went, and used all the Precaution possible, putting their Seals on the Stone of the Sepulchre, and giving the strictest Orders to the Guard. Here was all Fraud and Imposture provided against in the most effectual Manner possible: Jesus takes Care to alarm and put his Enemies upon their Guard,

Guard, as to this Point of so great Importance. Is this the Part of one who has a Fraud or a Cheat to carry on? Or rather, Is it not all that is the Reverse of such a Conduct? Could more be well done to cut off all Suspicion of Fraud?

If the righteous God were to direct such an Affair, Could any Thing more fit be done? And was not Jesus's whole Conduct intirely agreeable to, and of a Piece with this?

Impostors always have some worldly End to aim at, by some worldly Means; some selfish End to be carried on by the Concurrence of Men of the World. These are to be engag'd by all Arts of Management and Address.

Next to Money, Nothing is more effectual or necessary to engage Men, than Falling in with their favourite Notions, Opinions, Practices, and Vices. The Whole of his Conduct was opposite to every Thing of this Sort, as Light is to Darkness. Instead of giving into any Thing like this, he set himself in direct Contradiction to the most strongly prevail-

ing Prejudices and Vices of the *Jews*, and indeed of all Mankind.

It was the favourite Prejudice of the *Jews*, that their Messias was to be a conquering Prince, to make them the Head of the Heathen, and subdue the Nations under their Feet. He tells them, that he was their Messias, but that he was come to suffer ; that not only his Kingdom, but that he was not of this World ; he had Nothing to say to the Power, or the Riches of this Earth, but to shew the Nothingness of them.

They were governed in all their Conduct by what they called the Traditions of the Elders, and held them in the highest Esteem and Veneration. He set himself to explode and overturn them, for the good Reason which he gave, because they made the exprefs Commandments of God of none Effect through those Traditions ; they had the highest Opinion of themselves, on Account of their being a People peculiarly in Covenant with God, and held all the rest of the World in Contempt. He tells them, that the *Gentiles* of the
East,

East, and of the *West*, should all be taken in, and put upon the same Footing with them, than which, scarce any Thing could shock or irreconcile them more. In a Word, the most Part of his Conduct was a declared Opposition to all the Prejudices, the peculiar Notions, and the Vices of those he had to do with. Was this the Conduct of an Impostor, of a Man pursuing a worldly End, by worldly Means? Was this Endeavouring to engage, by Address and Artifice, the Men of this World to come into his Designs, and to help to carry on his Scheme? Was not his Conduct all that is the Reverse of this? And could the God of Truth and Righteousness act otherwise in the Case than he did?

But what Sort of Agents did he make Use of, to assist him in carrying on his Designs? Were they such Instruments as Impostors use to employ? Cunning, artful, bold, and enterprising Men? No, it is allow'd on all Hands, that they had not one of these Qualities.

They were, in themselves, plain, un-
 structed, undefining Men, who appear
 to have had little to recommend them to
 him, or the World, but Honesty and In-
 tegrity of Heart. But we shall be able
 to judge more effectually of them, when
 we come more particularly to examine
 their Conduct ; for the present it may be
 sufficient to observe that it is agreed on
 all Hands, that they were artless, fear-
 ful, unenterprising Men ; so that here also,
 in this important Step, the Choice of As-
 sociates, all Suspicion of Imposture is in
 the best Manner guarded against ; and the
 righteous and omnipotent God cannot be
 supposed to make a better Choice for the
 Purpose than this, to exclude all Ground
 of Suspicion, and to demonstrate to Man-
 kind, that no human Power, Learning,
 Wit, Eloquence, Riches, Artifice, or Ad-
 dress, could have any Share in effecting
 that Work, which his Almighty Power
 alone could bring about.

But let us proceed, and, in every Step
 before the Crucifixion of Jesus, we shall
 find all Surmize of Imposture, and Aim-
 ing

ing at any worldly End, quite shut out and prevented.

Could Jesus be suspected of aiming at the Power or Grandeur of this poor World? He had foretold, that he should be put to Death in the cruellest Manner by the Chief Priests and Elders; after his Foretelling this, the People give the highest Proofs that they believed him to have his Commission from God, *because no Man could do the Works which he did, unless God were with him.*

After actually Attempting to take him by Force, and make him a King, they still went on to shew the utmost Attachment to him; just before his Crucifixion, he comes in the most publick Manner to *Jerusalem*; the Multitude attends him with the most remarkable Devotion and Zeal: The Way under his Feet is strew'd with Leaves and Flowers, and they hannah him to *Jerusalem*, as coming in the Name of the Lord. Though he shunn'd; even by Working a Miracle, their Attempt to make him their King; yet, if he had any one worldly End in View,
Would

Would he not have taken some Advantage, from this strong Disposition of the People in his Favour, at least to save his Life from the determin'd Malice of the Chief Priests and Elders of the *Jews*? But he is all uniform and of a Piece from the Beginning, renouncing this World, and every Thing relating to it, but the Benefitting the Sons of Men; no one Word or Action looks towards Power or any earthly Scheme, but directly the opposite Way. So far was he from inviting or tempting Men to become his Followers, by promising them any worldly Advantage, that, quite on the contrary, he gave them the fullest and fairest Notice, that whoever became his Disciples, must not only give up all worldly Advantages, but also that they were to reckon upon all worldly Evils; that they would be hated and despised by all upon his Account; that they would be treated in the worst Manner, persecuted from City to City, with Loss of Liberty, of all Ease, and of Life itself. *Whoever will be my Disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily*

daily and follow me. Self-Denial of themselves, and Persecution from all Mankind, were declared to be the Terms of becoming his Disciples, and the Event exactly answer'd. Good God! that the Imputation of any Thing worldly could be brought against such a Procedure as this. If this Conduct was earthly, What can be called heavenly?

Thus, through his whole Conduct before his Death, he cuts off all Suspicion of aiming at any Thing like a worldly View by an Imposture; he guards against it in every Step with the utmost Caution, and calls even upon those who aimed at his Life, to provide against any Impostition, and prevent it in the most effectual Manner they well could.

But though it be allow'd, that he was not an Impostor, it will be maintained that he was an *Enthusiast*; that he was one of those, who have dy'd for the Sake of propagating in the World a peculiar Set of Notions in Religion.

As to this, it must be observ'd, that the Question before us to be examined, is,
Whether

Whether (as *St. Paul* speaks) the Apostles were false Witnesses of the Resurrection, Whether we have sufficient Evidence of it, to engage us to act as People who believe it? If we have, if Christ rose from the Dead, all will allow, that all Suspicion of Enthusiasm must be cut off.

SECT.

S E C T. XIX.

In which the Nature of the Evidence which we have for the Resurrection is examined, and the Objections to it, as witnessed by the Apostles, are answer'd.

AFTER Considering Things relating to the Resurrection, previous to the Crucifixion, let us proceed to examine the Fact itself, and the Evidence we have for it: Here it is agreed on all Hands, that Jesus dy'd upon the Cross, that the dead Body was laid in a Tomb, that the Chief Priests of the *Jews*, and Pharisees, with the Consent of *Pilate* the *Roman* Governor, placed a Guard on the Sepulchre, and their Seals upon the great Stone that cover'd the Entrance of it. It is further agreed, that, during the Time that the Guards continu'd at the Sepulchre, the Seals were broken, the great Stone was removed from the Entrance, and the Body gone. This being the Case,
all

all Mankind will agree, that the Guards were strictly answerable for their Charge ; they ought to give a very clear and consistent Account of it, or they must with the greatest Justice be pronounced to have been corrupted, either by those who employ'd them, or by the Apostles. What then was the Account which they gave of the important Charge which they had receiv'd ? The very worst, the weakest, and most absurd that is possible.

They impeach the Apostles of stealing the Body, while they, the Guards, were asleep ; they were asleep, the Body is gone, and they affirm the Apostles to have stolen it. Was ever such Testimony receiv'd ? Were ever such Witnesses heard to ? Witnesses who affirm they were asleep, when they say the Fact was done, to which they bear Witness : Common Sense therefore, and common Justice, must pronounce these Guards to have been corrupted, since they gave an Account of the Charge which they had receiv'd, so inconsistent with, and repugnant to common Sense. By whom were they corrupted ?

Surely

Surely not by the Apostles, on whom they laid all the Load of the Fraud ; common Sense can never admit of this. That poor Men should bribe these Guards : To do what ? To accuse them of being the greatest and blackest of Impostors ! This is repugnant to all the Principles of Sense. It therefore necessarily follows, that these Soldiers were corrupted by the other Side, by their Employers, who had Money and Power abundantly sufficient to engage them. Here then the Imputation of Corruption is evidently taken off the Apostles, and clearly fixed on the other Side. Well, but tho' the Testimony of Men asleep is Nonsense not to be hearken'd to ; and tho' the Apostles could never bribe the Guards to accuse themselves (the Apostles) of Fraud and Imposture, Was there no Likelihood, from the Nature of the Thing, that the Apostles might attempt to carry off the Body ? It is plain, that the Chief of the *Jews* had great Apprehensions that they would attempt it, by the extraordinary Care they took to guard and seal it up. To this we answer, All that can
with

with any Colour of Reason be infer'd from the great Care which the Chief of the *Jews* took of the dead Body of *Jesus*, is, that they thought it a Matter of considerable Consequence in all Regards, that called for their peculiar Attention; but whether their Apprehensions were owing to what they had to fear from a few poor, weak, fearful Men, who all had forsaken or denied their Master, or to what they might fear from the mighty Power which had so long appear'd to reside with *Jesus* (particularly in raising *Lazarus* and the Widow's Son to Life) of this, the common Sense of Mankind must judge: And I am perswaded that unprejudic'd Reason will ever confess that this Care extraordinary, and solicitous Watchfulness of the *Jews*, in this Affair, is a standing Monument of, and Testimony to the mighty Works, which for three Years together *Jesus* wrought amongst them.

How far the Apostles were likely to engage in a Fraud of any Sort, will fully appear under the Third Article when we come to examine the whole Conduct,

duct, after that they lost their Master : For the Present it may suffice to observe, that the Soldiers Testimony is scarcely more absurd and repugnant to Reason, than is the Supposition, that a few poor, weak, fearful Men should undertake so daring an Enterprize as to force open a Tomb, and carry off a dead Body guarded by a *Custodia* of Roman Soldiers ; and it is still much more extravagant to suppose, that, if they should attempt it, they should succeed in it, unperceiv'd by the Guard.

However the Body of *Jesus* was sealed up in the Sepulchre on *Friday*, and early on *Sunday* Morning it was gone. If the Account which the Soldiers gave of it was absurd, it is incumbent on the Apostles to justify the Account to which they bore Testimony. They say, that the Body of *Jesus* was raised to Life by the almighty Power of God, which had so long shewn forth itself in him. They bore Witness (and sealed their Testimony with their Sufferings and Blood) that they conversed with, and eat, and drank with him for forty Days

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after his Resurrection. That not only the Apostles, but above five hundred Persons at once were Witnesses to the Truth of his Resurrection ; and that, at the End of forty Days, the Apostles saw him (as they stood about him) ascend into Heaven.

To make this Account satisfactory, there are two Things necessary: *First*, To answer what Objections lie against it: And then to examine farther, Whether any Suspicion can fairly lie against the Apostles, as insufficient or false Witnesses of this Account of the Resurrection? The *First* Objection brought against the Resurrection, as witness'd to by the Apostles, is, that the Body, being gone early on *Sunday* Morning, did not at all answer what Jesus foretold, and engaged for, to the *Jews*, viz. *That his Body was to lie three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth : The not Keeping then to the Time appointed lays the Whole under Suspicion of Fraud. To this the Answer is clear : We have five or six several Accounts of this Matter, and they

* Matth. xii. 40.

all agree in explaining those Words,* to his Rising on the third Day ; and it is plain, that the Chief Priests and Scribes understood it in this Way, from the Words in which they address *Pilate*, viz. Command, *say they*, that the Sepulchre be made sure until the third Day.

Accordingly Jesus rose the third Day, reckoning that on which he dy'd as one ; and this is the Way of Speaking that ever hath, and doth still take Place.

If you say that any Person dy'd on *Friday*, and was bury'd the third Day, every one, that has the least Knowledge of the Meaning of Language, will understand, that the Person that you speak of was bury'd on *Sunday*.

As Jesus therefore, on several Occasions, fully explained himself as to this Particular, so it is notorious, that, in the common Use of Language, three Days, or three Days and three Nights, are used indifferently, as signifying the same Thing ; it being frequent in the common Use of Speech, when you speak of any Number of Days, to take the Nights that belong

* Matth. xii. 40.

to the several Days into the Account, or to leave them out.

And, if you promise to perform any Thing in three Days, all will allow, that it will be a Matter indifferent, whether you do it just when the third Day is past, or any Time upon the third Day. As we see therefore, that this Way of Speaking is no Way repugnant to the common Use of Speech, so every one hath a Right to explain his own Words; and in six several Accounts, which we have of this Matter, these Words of Jesus being three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth, are constantly explained to his Rising on the third Day. Nor did the Priests and Scribes understand the Words (as we observ'd before) in any other Way, when they desired *Pilate* that the Sepulchre might be made sure *until* the third Day.

It may, perhaps, be said, that, by this Method of Proceeding, there were no Witnesses present at the Time of the Resurrection; but this is by no Means agreeable to Fact: Were not their own
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Guards by the careful Appointment of the *Jewish* Priests there present? Who, had they not been drove from the Truth by their Influence and Authority, had given a better Account of themselves and of the Fact, very different from the most absurd and ridiculous Testimony that ever was heard out of the Mouths of Men pretending to be Witnesses to a Matter of Importance.

But however this be, it is sufficient to establish the Truth of the Resurrection, that many proper Witnesses saw, and conversed with; and eat, and drank with Jesus after the Day on which he foretold that he would rise.

But there is another Objection, which is made to the Account of the Resurrection given by the Apostles, which deserves to be consider'd, *viz.* That, if Jesus did really rise, Why did he not shew himself openly to all the People of the *Jews*? If he was the Messiah sent to that Nation, it was natural and fit to produce this great Credential of his Commission to the Governors and Head of that People to whom he was

sent. Of this St. Peter takes Notice:
** Him God raised the third Day from the Dead, and shewed him openly, not to all the People, but to Witnesses chosen before of God, even unto us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the Dead.*
 The Point then before us, is, to give a satisfactory Account, Why Jesus did not shew himself openly to all the People, Why he should shew himself only to chosen Witnesses?

To this the Answer is very clear and plain. It is very manifest in the Gospels, that Jesus was first sent to the *Jews*, to the House of *Israel*, as they are called;
 † *I am not sent, but unto the lost Sheep of House of Israel.* Accordingly, to them he preach'd, and among them he wrought all his mighty Works for their Conviction. But this Commission manifestly ended with their final Rejection and Crucifixion of him.

For just before his Death, in his last pathetic Farewell (though he had told

* Acts x. 40.

† Matth xv. 24.

them,

them, that he should rise from the Dead) he declares that they (the *Jews*) should see him no more, till they should be disposed to receive him with Joy, saying, *Blessed be he that cometh in the Name of the Lord*. He tells them, that was their Day, in which the Things that belong'd to their Peace had been offer'd to them; and, since they had rejected them, they were never again to be offer'd to them in the same Way, they were now for ever to be hid from their Eyes.

Here then is it at once manifest, that Jesus declared before-hand, that he would shew himself no more to them; and the Reason of the Resolution at the same Time appears, *viz.* because their Time was past; their Messiah had been offer'd to them in the fullest and properest Manner, they had finally rejected him, so his Mission to them was at an End. What then was the Result? Why, as he had declared that there was an End to all publick Intercourse between him and them, as he foretold, *that they should see him openly no more*, he was oblig'd by his own Prophe-

cy, and by the Nature of his Mission, not to shew himself openly to all the People, but to Witnesses, sufficient and proper for *a new Commission*, now to be opened upon his Resurrection, *viz. To propagate the Gospel to all Mankind.*

We find him declaring upon his Resurrection, that *all Power was given unto him in Heaven and Earth*; and, pursuant to this his Commission to his Disciples is, *Go teach all Nations, &c.* Here then we see a Mission intirely new, for the Propagation of the Gospel to all Mankind. The Resurrection was the great Seal of this Commission, and who were to be Witnesses to it?

The *Jews*, as a Nation, were precluded from it by their final Rejection of his peculiar Mission to them, and by the Prediction of Jesus. What then was to be done? A sufficient Number of proper Persons is chosen of God, to be Witnesses of this Resurrection.

These are to be sent into all the World, to bear Testimony to all Nations of this and all other mighty Wonders, which shew'd

shew'd forth themselves in Christ Jesus, of which they had been Eye-witnesses ; and, to give them Credit, wherever they come, they are also endued with Power from on High.

The Power of working Miracles is given to them, that Men may believe their Testimony, receive their Doctrines, and accept the Offer of Pardon, tender'd to them through Christ Jesus. What can be more reasonable or righteous than this whole Procedure ? What can be more natural, fit, and proper, than every Step of it ? Is there any Thing wanting or insufficient in this Dispensation, for the Attaining of the End to which it was directed ? What Ground of Suspicion of Fraud can there remain ? Can any one entertain a Surmise, that the Apostles could be false or insufficient Witnesses of the Truth of the Facts to which they bore Testimony ? This is the Question which we propos'd to examine, after Answering the main Objections that have been made to the Resurrection. Let us proceed then to consider it.

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First then, That the Apostles were not insufficient Witnesses of the Facts to which they bore Testimony, is manifest : For it is allow'd by all, that those Facts were Things that were the Objects of their Senses, of which their Eyes, and Ears, and Feeling could perfectly judge : The Miracles which Jesus wrought were all such, exceeding many in Number, repeated, publick, done before Crowds of Witnesses for three Years and a Half together ; and the last great decisive one of the Resurrection was intirely such, as all Men of common Sense must be perfect Judges of : To judge of it, no more was necessary, than to be able to distinguish between the Body of a Friend dead, and the Body of the same Friend living.

It is impossible that the Eyes, and Ears, and Feeling of a Number of Men, who conversed, and eat, and drank with this Friend for forty Days together, should be deceiv'd in such a Matter. As therefore there cannot be any Doubt of the Apostles being sufficient Witnesses of the Resurrection, let us now enquire, Whether any
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Suspicion of the Apostles being *false Witnesses*, that Jesus rose from the Dead, can fairly lie against them?

The Point then which I am now to prove is this, *viz.* That the Opinion, or Suspicion, that the Apostles were, or could be false Witnesses, is so monstrously absurd, as that the common Sense of Mankind must ever renounce it, as inconsistent with, and irreconcilable to the first Principles of natural Reason. This I shall plainly shew, by proving that it necessarily contains in it these two great Absurdities, *viz.*

First, It necessarily supposes, that a few of the greatest Fools or Madmen, that ever liv'd, should, with the greatest Success, carry on and effect the most difficult and improbable Design that ever was undertaken.

Secondly, The second great Absurdity, which it necessarily supposes, is, that a Number of the blackest Villains, that ever were upon Earth, should sacrifice themselves and all that was dear to them, to promote the best System of Morality, the best

best Collection of Precepts for Virtue and a Holy Life, that ever was heard of.

First, That the Apostles were or could be false Witnesses necessarily containeth in it this great Absurdity, *viz.* That a few of the greatest Fools or Madmen, that ever were in the World, should, with the greatest Success, carry on and effect the most difficult and improbable Design that ever was undertaken.

That the Opinion that the Apostles could be false Witnesses, necessarily makes them Fools or Madmen, is plain ; for he who sets himself to invent an unprofitable Lye, and resolves to renounce and sacrifice all Ease and Goods, and even his Life in this World, for the Propagation and Maintenance of this unprofitable Lye, and not only resolves to do it, but actually puts this Resolution in Execution : He, I say, that acts in this Manner, will be allow'd by all to be, strictly speaking, either a Madman or a Fool ; because he sacrifices all that is dear or desirable, for Nothing, or for what is worse than Nothing,

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for the monstrous Pleasure of telling an unprofitable Lye.

That the Opinion that the Apostles could be false Witnesses, make this to be their Case, is plain ; for if they were false Witnesses, they invented a monstrous Lye : And, that in such Case they invented an unprofitable Lye, all will allow, who consider, that they not only professed to renounce and sacrifice all worldly Profit and Advantage whatsoever, but in Fact they did renounce and sacrifice it : All Accounts testifying and agreeing in this, that extreme Want and Poverty, and all Kinds of torturing Deaths that the Cruelty of Man could devise, was all that any of them got for their Pains. We may therefore fairly conclude, that, if the Apostles were false Witnesses, they were, strictly speaking, Madmen and Fools.

Let us now see what these Madmen and Fools undertook, and are allow'd in Fact to have done. The Work they undertook was this : They set themselves to persuade the whole World, over-run with Idolatry, and the Worship of many Gods,
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for above two Thousand Years, to renounce the Gods of their Fathers, the several Religions of their respective Countries, in which they had been brought up, than which you can hardly mention a more difficult Work.

They set themselves to persuade the learned Men of the World, the Philosophers of all the several Sects, to renounce their vain Philosophy, their Opposition of Science falsely so called, upon which they so much valued themselves, and despised the rest of the World.

They set themselves to persuade the whole Race of Mankind, that was sunk and abandoned to the last Degree of Vice and Corruption, to renounce their darling Lusts, though they were as dear to them as their Right Hands, or their Eyes, and by a long Prescription were universally established; and, in the Room of them, Mortification and Self-denial, the Cross and Persecution, was to be taken up and submitted to. This was the Work, the difficult Work, which these Men undertook, in direct Contradiction not only to the Lusts,

Lusts, and Inclinations, and Passions, and Customs of the whole World, but against all the Power, and Riches, and Endeavours of all the Kings, and Princes, and Governors of the Earth.

Could Madmen and Fools carry on and effect such a wonderful Work as this? But what Means did they make Use of in the Carrying on and Effecting it?

Had they Power, or Riches, or Learning, or Rhetoric, to force or to bribe, or artfully to persuade Men to their Interests? No; naked and destitute of all earthly Power, they were to cope with all the Powers of the World; poor and necessitous, they were to contend with all the Riches and Interests of the Earth.

Without Learning, or any of the Arts of Eloquence, to confute and overturn all the Philosophy and Eloquence of *Greece* and *Rome*, and all the various Religions of the World.

And now we may appeal to the common Sense of all Mankind, whether it be not a monstrous Absurdity to suspect that the Men, who, in these Circumstances, carry'd
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on, and effected such a Work as this, could be such Madmen and Fools, as to be false Witnesses of a Lye unprofitable and ruinous to all their Interests in this World : As it is what the Mind of Man must ever renounce as irreconcilable to the plainest Dictates and first Principles of Reason ; so must it also allow, that this plain Stating of their Case is a convincing Argument, that the Apostles could not be false Witnesses of God ; and consequently all they affirm'd of the blessed Jesus, his Miracles and Resurrection, must be true. But,

Secondly, The Opinion, or Suspicion, that the Apostles were or could be false Witnesses, contains in it farther this great Absurdity, *viz.* That a Number of the blackest Villains, that ever were upon Earth, should sacrifice themselves for no other End, but to confirm and promote, and propagate through the World, the best System of Morality, the best Collection of Precepts for Virtue and a holy Life, that ever was known.

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That this Opinion or Suspicion contains in it this Absurdity, is plain : For, *First*, If the Apostles were false Witnesses, they were as bad Men as ever were upon Earth.

An Impostor who sets himself to invent a Lye of any Kind, in order to impose upon and deceive Mankind, in any important Matter, is, with the greatest Justice, accounted a Villain ; and, the more important the Matter is, the Villainy will always be esteem'd the greater.

Now, Religion being the greatest Concern of Mankind, upon which all their true Happiness depends, he who sets himself to delude and lead them into Error, in a Matter upon which that depends, must be look'd upon as the worst among Men : But how beyond Imagination is the Villainy aggravated, if such a Person pretends to be immediately commissioned, directed, and inspired by God himself ? If he pretends to work Miracles in Confirmation of this Imposture, and goes about to prostitute the last and highest Evidence, that God hath given to Man for the Proof of

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any Point, to establish a Lye, for the Service of the Devil. This is an Impiety equal to the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost ; for it seems pretty equal, Whether the Works of the Holy Ghost be attributed to the Devil, or the Works of the Devil be ascribed to the Holy Ghost. It is plain then that the Supposing the Apostles to be false Witnesses, makes them to be the worst of Men that ever were upon Earth.

To proceed therefore : These Men pretended to teach Mankind certain Rules and Precepts for Virtue and a holy Life, which, if practised, they said would certainly guide them to Happiness, both in this World, and in the next. Were these Precepts really such, or no ? Are they all calculated for the making Men wise, and good, and happy, now and for ever ? Do they all aim at this one great End ? This is allow'd by the greatest Enemies of Christianity, when they call it the Republication of the Law of Nature.

From the Creation, till the Time that these Precepts were deliver'd to the World,

World, Nothing worthy to be compared with them had been heard of by Mankind. All the great Genius's of the Earth, the laborious Searchers after Truth and Happiness, had not been able, in near four Thousand Years, to produce any Thing for the Advancement of Virtue, that can deserve to be nam'd with the Precepts of the Holy Jesus. 'Till they were given to the World, Mankind wander'd in Darkness, and toil'd themselves in vain, in search of those Ways that lead to Happiness ; and the faint glimmering Lights, which their Philosophers gave the few who set up to be learned, serv'd only, in many Instances, to mislead them ; whilst Mankind, in general, lay overwhelmed and lost, in the grossest Ignorance, and most abandon'd Corruption of Manners : But no sooner do the Christian Doctrines appear, but all those Matters are put in the plainest and clearest Lights ; all Vices, that had gained the Name of Virtue, are exploded, and all Virtues, that adorn the Soul of Man, refined and carried to such Heights of Perfection,

fection, as can only be aimed at in this Life, and can never fully be attained to, but in the next.

It is absolutely irreconcilable to common Sense, that a Collection of such Precepts, as these, should be the Contrivance of the most impious Cheats and Impostors.

But let us proceed, and consider a little farther, what End these Impostors could propose to themselves; for common Sense tells us, that he, who is not a Fool or a Madman, will not run himself into Dangers and Calamities extraordinary, without proposing some End to himself in those Actions, which must necessarily engage him in those Troubles. Reason also tells us, that must be the End, which such a reasonable Creature proposeth to himself, to which all those Actions have the most natural Tendency, to which they, at last, do actually bring him, and which such Person did always profess to pursue.

Now we have already proved, that the Apostles were not Fools or Madmen; therefore in those Actions which engaged them

them in so much Danger and Calamity, they must have had some certain End in View.

The great End, they pretended to pursue, was the Propagating through the World those noble and sublime Precepts, teaching Men the only Way to Virtue and Happiness, bearing Witness to them, confirming and establishing them, by the Sacrifice of all that is dear and desirable, even Life itself. And now to what other End, different from this, did all their Actions tend? Did they not travel with unparalleled Toil and Difficulty from Country to Country, proclaiming those blessed Truths to Mankind? Did not all their indefatigable Pains and Endeavours tend most directly and manifestly to this great End? And did they not at last, by their prodigious Labours, actually compass that blessed End? Did they not actually propagate, confirm, and establish those glorious Truths, through all the Nations of the then known World? By sacrificing their Lives, and to Death bearing Witness to them, suffering all Sorts of Torments, sooner than, in any one Instance,

give one of them up, and sealing them with the irrefragable Testimony of their Blood. Could they aim at worldly Riches or Honour, or Power? Which of their Actions, after they declared their Lord to be risen from the Dead, had the least Appearance of tending to such an End? Nay, which of them had not rather a direct and manifest Tendency to make them live and die under the afflictive Load of Poverty, Reproach, and Persecution, and the lowest Degree of Ability to command the smallest Comforts of Life, or even Life itself?

We may therefore fairly conclude, that the Witnessing the glorious Truths of Christianity to Mankind, was the great and ultimate End of all the mighty Labours of their Lives.

And now we may appeal to the unprejudiced Reason of Mankind, whether it be not a monstrous Absurdity, to imagine that these Men, who sacrificed themselves to propagate thro' the World the most perfect Set of moral Precepts, that ever were heard of, should be the worst of Men,

Men, that ever were on Earth, the most impious of Villains, Cheats, and Impostors : Who could pretend that they heard, and saw, and receiv'd from God, Things that they neither receiv'd, nor saw, nor heard. As it is what the Mind of Man can never admit of, as it is contradictory to the first Principles of common Sense, so the Consequence is unavoidable, that the Apostles could not be false Witnesses of God, but that all they affirm'd of the blessed Jesus, his Miracles and Resurrection, must be true.

But it is still objected to the Manner in which the Apostles bore Testimony to the several Nations of the Earth : That they separated from each other, and so dispersed themselves through the then known World, that the Evidence which most Nations had of the Truth of the Resurrection, and of Christianity, was no more than the Testimony of a single Man, which, in an Affair of such Importance, seems insufficient.

To this we answer, That the mighty Power, which shew'd forth itself in Jesus,

continuing to accompany the Apostles whithersoever they went, bore ample Testimony to all they said, and was equal to Thousands of Witnesses from among Men: As St. *John* speaks, *If we receive the Witness of Men, the Witness of God is greater.*

And this leads us to consider, a little more particularly, that which is the Crown and Completion of the Testimony which God gave to the Truth of the Christian Religion, *viz.* That the Apostles, the Witnesses of the Resurrection, and of all that Jesus did and taught, had every one of them their Commission sealed by Heaven, to produce wherever they went, much in the same Manner in which Jesus proved his Mission to be from God, *viz.* By curing all Distempers with a Word of their Mouths, by speaking to all the various Nations of the Earth through which they travelled, in their several respective Languages, and even by raising the Dead to Life. This appears to have been so absolutely and indispensably necessary to convince Mankind of the Truth of the Whole, that the divine Wisdom seems to tell

tell the World, that all, that had been before done, would have been insufficient without it; when we find that Jesus would not suffer them to go upon their Work of bearing Witness to him, till they should be *endued with Power from on High*.

As this appears to have been essential to the giving due Authority to their Mission, so we find it to have been most effectual: Inasmuch, that even the *Jewish* Council of Chief Priests, of Scribes, and Pharisees, who had renounced and crucified their Messiah, appear plainly to have been greatly stagger'd, when they saw the same Power, that shew'd forth itself in Jesus, remain with his Disciples after he was gone; and it is plain, that it had much more Effect upon them, than all that Jesus had before done, to prove his Mission divine; for we find that when *Gamaliel*, one of their Body, made a short State of the Apostles Case, and proceeded upon the Supposition, that the Works and Doctrines of Jesus, and of his Apostles, might be from God; he spoke so much the Sense and Apprehensions of the whole Assembly,

Assembly, that they immediately came without any Opposition into his Proposals, and the Reason was, *lest, haply, they should be found, even to fight against God.**

That which had such a remarkable Effect, even on the hardened *Jews*, who had renounced and crucified the Lord of Life and Glory, might well operate in the strongest Manner on the rest of the World, who were free from most of the Prejudices, under which the *Jews* laboured ; and accordingly we see, that from the Time that the Apostles demonstrated to the World, that the Power of God resided in them ; *the Lord working with them, with Signs following* ; Multitudes were daily converted and added to the Church, and (as we have already set forth) Christianity from that Time made its Way through a World of most amazing

* The Holy Scripture hath God for its Author, Salvation for its End, and Truth without any Mixture of Error for its Matter. Therefore I gratefully receive and rejoice in the Light of Revelation, which sets me at Rest in many Things, the Manner whereof my poor Reason can by no Means make out to me. *Locke's Posth. Op.*

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Difficulties, with irresistible Force, which all the evil Powers of Earth and Hell, that were combined against it, could not controul or withstand.

SECT.

S E C T. XX.

In which the Case of the Unbelievers of these Days is compared with that of the Jews, who saw the Miracles of Jesus; shewing that we have several Proofs and Advantages which the Jews wanted; and that (upon the Whole) they, who now reject the Christian Religion, would reject it, though the same Evidence, which the Jews had, were offer'd to them.

HAVING drawn up such a State of the Evidences of the Divine Original of the Christian Religion, as appears to be suitable to the Design of this Essay: It may not be amiss to consider a Plea, which some Unbelievers make, by which they think to weaken or elude the Force of those Arguments, that prove that Jesus was sent from God.

They urge, that though the Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion might be sufficient to engage the Assent
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of the *Jews*, who were Witnesses to the Works which Jesus wrought; yet that, they not having the same Evidence, it cannot be expected, that, at this Distance of Time, an Historical Account of such Things should be of equal Weight for their Conviction. They insist that Time abates the Force of all Historical Testimony, and that the Historical Faith, which is grounded on that Testimony, must grow weaker, in Proportion as the Testimony is deliver'd down through a greater Number of Ages.

I shall not here enlarge on what is commonly, and with great Reason, given in Reply to this, *viz.* That, if this Reasoning be allow'd to take Place, there must be an End of all Faith, in any History whatsoever; when, at the same Time, it is notorious, that there is no Man who hath any Acquaintance with the ancient History (for Example) of the four great Monarchies of the World, that hath the least Doubt concerning the Truth of that History, with regard to the
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main Facts, in which the Historians of those Times agree.

And yet, How different is the Attestation, which the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament receiv'd, from any Thing that those other ancient Histories can pretend to?

Did any of the Writers of those Histories seal the Truth of what they related, with their Blood? Did great Numbers of those, who were Eye and Ear Witnesses of the Facts there related, suffer the severest Persecutions and Torments, the Loss of all worldly Goods, and of Life itself, bearing Witness, to Death, to the Truth of those Facts? Did Thousands and Myriads chuse to live and die miserably, sooner than renounce those Truths? Which was the Case of the first Ages of Christianity, when those Facts were as notorious and certain, as the Revolution is with us, or the Facts relating to the Restoration (to go farther back) or the Reformation in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*: What History, even of those that are reckoned most authentic,

tic, has had 'the hundredth Part of the Attestation, which the Scripture History hath receiv'd? What ancient History, in a Century or two after it was wrote, was translated into most of the Languages of the various Nations of the then known World? What an effectual Security was this against Corruption? What History ever was so interesting, so affecting the most important Concerns of all Mankind, their Happiness in an everlasting State, that must succeed the present? What History ever did, in Fact, so much engage the Attention of the World? Infomuch, that all the Powers, and Vices, and Religions of the Earth, did actually engage and combine against it, in order to extirpate it, by the dreadfulest Persecutions, Torments, and Massacres, that have been heard of. What Facts were ever transacted in an Age more fitted or disposed for curious and careful Enquiry; when Arts and Arms, Philosophy and true Free-thinking, were at their Height; and when by most of the then known World (being in quiet Subjection to the *Roman Empire*)

pire) Communication between Nation and Nation was settled in the most easy, effectual, and expeditious Manner? Yet, under all these Circumstances, What Traces do we find of any Imputation of Imposture and Falshood laid upon these Writings, in the Age when the Imposture and Falshood might with Ease have been detected? And yet never were there Writings in the World, in which both God and Man were more concern'd than these, either to detect their Falshood, or to confirm their Truth. And yet never was there a Doctrine, or History, in the World that had, for the Proof of its Truth, the hundredth Part of the Attestation that the Gospel History and Doctrine received both from God and Man.

Now though a History, thus attested beyond all other Histories, upon the first Principles of common Sense demands and claims the Assent of our Minds, in Proportion as it hath been better attested than others; as it is, in Proportion, in the highest Degree credible, and, as such, it should in Proportion, exclude Doubt out of our Minds,

Minds, concerning the Truth of it (which is always the Case of Things in the highest Manner attested) yet we shall here proceed farther, and shew that there is not, upon the Whole, such Difference as is imagined, between the Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion, which the *Jews* and immediate Disciples of Christ had, and that, which we have at this Day.

They had the Evidence of Sense, which, no Doubt, was very powerful for Conviction; and we have the Evidence of a History, infinitely better attested than any History of equal Date, that ever was in the World. Thus far however they had the Advantage of us; but let us go on, and consider whether we have not, in some Instances, the Advantage of them in some Proofs and Helps to Conviction which they wanted. For, since the Balance, as yet, inclines to their Side, by the Advantage which sensitive Evidence hath over a Record infinitely better attested than any History ever was, our Business must be to throw into our Scale all those Proofs and Advantages which we

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have, and they wanted; and, in the Result, the Question will be, Whether the Balance stands even, or to which Side it inclines?

The first Thing, we are to throw into the Scale, is a mighty Advantage which we enjoy above them, that we are free from dreadfully strong Prejudices against the Christian Religion; as it must be acknowledged a vast Disadvantage, under which the *Jews* laboured, that their Conviction was obstructed by as strong Prepossessions, as can blind the Minds of Men.

The Prejudices of Vice of all Kinds, against a Religion that strictly condemns them all, was common to them, with all Mankind; but the *Jews* had several Prepossessions, a dead Weight upon them, from which we are intirely free. As, *First*, the Prejudices of Education, early Instruction, and most constant Inculcating: This notoriously took Place as much among them, as it ever did in any Nation upon Earth: By which Means there never was a People more obstinate-ly

ly tenacious of their Religion, than they were, as, by the same Means, they continue so to be, to this Day.

The next strong Prejudice, under which they labour'd, was the unfortunate Misinterpretations of their Law and their Prophets, which they receiv'd from their Doctors and from Tradition, which they held in as much Veneration as their Law. Of this Sort was that universally prevailing Notion, that the Messiah was to be the Conqueror of the Earth, the Founder of an universal Empire, that was to prevail over all the World ; the extreme Difficulty of extirpating Prejudices early imbibed, and riveted by Education, is confessed by all Mankind ; but here comes in, additional to that, the still more and more universally influencing Prejudice of Interest.

The *Jews* looked upon themselves as the peculiar Favourites of God and the Messias, eminently distinguished above all Mankind ; insomuch that they counted upon Nothing less, than that, whenever the irresistible and universal Con-

queror of the Earth, the Messiah, should appear; they should all be Kings, and Princes, and Governors under him. This, we see, was so general a Notion, that it had taken Possession, even of the Minds of the Apostles. In one Place we find them disputing which should be the greatest, when he should take Possession of his earthly Kingdom : And, in another, we find two of them petitioning *that they might sit, the one on his Right-hand, and the other on his Left, in his Kingdom.*

As these were the Expectations which the *Jews* had for themselves, and for their Descendants, when they found that Jesus declared, that his Kingdom was not of this World ; and when they saw that, instead of Crowns and Scepters, whoever would be his Disciple, must take up his Cross daily, and follow him, through the lowest and severest State of Humiliation, Abasement, and Sufferings : With what mighty Force did the universally prevailing Principle and Prejudice of Interest, plead against him? Their Chief Priests, the Rulers, and leading Men among them, saw

saw that their Law, by which they had their Wealth, their Power and Authority among the People, was to be abolished, if they accepted Jesus as their Messiah ; and, instead of earthly Power, and Riches, and Pleasure, and Grandeur, which they counted upon, they were to part even with that Share of it, which they already had, and get Nothing in Exchange, but a Cross and Persecution ; to be despised, reviled, and hated by all Men for his Sake. When this was the Case, it must be acknowledged, that a dreadful Load of the most powerful and universally prevailing Prejudices obstructed their Conviction.

Now to balance the Advantage, which their sensible Evidence had over our highly attested Gospel-history, of the same Facts, we have the mighty Advantage over them, that we are intirely free from the oppressive Load of those Prepossessions of Education and Interest, whose terrible Power to clog and bias the human Mind no one can fully conceive, because they, who are most under its Power, are least sensible of it, and whose

irrefistible Force Nothing but the most honest Use of our free Powers, concurring with the omnipotent Aid of the divine Spirit, can controul.

It seems therefore, that, even here, the Balance appears to be in Suspence, and it is a doubtful Point, *viz.* Whether the sensible Evidence, which the *Jews* had, was more likely to convince them, than our Gospel-history so eminently attested, as it hath been, is to convince us; when they were under the mighty Power and Prejudice of Education and Interest, to sway them to renounce the Christian Religion, while we have both Interest and Education to incline us to receive it.

These are some of the great Advantages which we have above the *Jews*, who lived in our Saviour's Time; but we have a great deal of Evidence also, which those *Jews* wanted, to throw into the Scale, to make it incline to our Side: As, *First*, we know the Certainty of that of which they had no Notion, *viz.* The amazing Swiftnefs with which the Christian Religion made its Way through all the

the Nations of the then known World, bearing down all the most violent Opposition before it, without and against all human worldly Means, and the constant natural Course of Things, 'till it conquered even the Hearts of the Kings and Princes of the Earth, who became its nursing Fathers and nursing Mothers.

Take this Affair in its genuine Light : Here is a Person who appears in the World in all the meanest Circumstances of it ; poor and low, and consequently despised by all, whose Hearts esteem Nothing, but what they call the good Things of this World.

He declares himself to be the Messiah, a Teacher sent from God, to redeem and to instruct Mankind ; and though, for three Years and a Half, he gave all the highest Proofs, that he had his Mission from God, that in such a Case could be look'd for, he is notwithstanding maltreated and outraged by all, in the basest Manner ; *he is despised and rejected of Men* ; he is represented in all the worst of Lights ; and at last seized by publick Authority

thority as the vilest of Malefactors ; *he is brought from Prison and from Judgment,* and crucified alive between two Thieves ; he is put to Death in the most shameful and cruel Manner, the Death of a Slave !

He had taught a Religion, that had no one meer worldly Encouragement to engage Men to embrace it ; but, on the contrary, all the earthly Discouragements that you can conceive or reckon up. He fairly tells all Mankind, that whoever would be his Disciple, must not only renounce all that is most dear to them, their Vices, the Religion of their Country, their Substance, their Ease, their Friends, and dearest Relations ; but that they must look for Nothing in Exchange in this World, but to be hated and despised of all Mankind ; be persecuted by all the Powers of the Earth, and at length lose their Lives by the most cruel and barbarous Methods ; *whilst they, who kill'd them, would think that they did God Service.*

To proclaim this Religion to a World overwhelm'd with Wickedness, and all possible Prepossessions that could prejudice them

them against it, he chuses a few poor illiterate Men, who had no one earthly Thing to recommend them to Mankind, but the Innocency and Inoffensiveness of their Lives.

He leaves with them, indeed, the mighty Powers, which were the Credentials of his own Mission ; but they were, notwithstanding, as he forewarned them, treated just in the same Manner, as he himself had been treated.

They and Myriads of those, who, in Opposition to all the dreadful Discouragements, that were enough to strike Flesh and Flood with Horror, embraced this despised and persecuted Religion, liv'd and dy'd miserably, for near three Centuries from the Death of Christ. All the Wickedness and Powers, and Prejudices, and Cruelties of Earth and Hell, were combined and excited furiously against them, for near three Hundred Years ; and what was the Result ? Notwithstanding all these dreadful Discouragements and Obstructions, more and greater than Words can express, or we can now conceive, this Religion,

Religion, thus amazingly circumstanced, bore down all before it, prevailed every where with incredible Rapidity, like an universal Flood, and at last rose so high, as to prevail over the Vices and the sensual Hearts of the Kings and Princes, and Governors of the Earth ; and this, as hath been shewn, without and against all human worldly Means, and the constant natural Course of Things in the moral World. He who will not acknowledge the out-stretch'd Arm of the all-powerful God in this, that it, and it only, could produce this amazing State of Things, without and in Opposition to all human Means, would not have acknowledged it in the Works that Jesus wrought,

They were not more calculated for Conviction than this is ; yet this Evidence of infinite Weight we have, and the *Jews*, who lived when Jesus was on Earth, wanted ; and, when thrown into the Scale, to balance the sensible Evidence which they had, must have a great Effect.

But

But we have still more Evidence of great Weight (which they wanted) to balance any Advantage which they had over us, *viz.* The Fulfilling the Prophecies foretold by Jesus; among which this of the *sudden Propagation of the Christian Religion* was but one.

Of the many Predictions, which the *Jews*, who lived when Jesus was upon Earth, could not see the Completion of, the Principal, on which we shall here insist, is,

First, His Foretelling the Destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*.

The Destruction of the City of *Jerusalem* we find foretold by Jesus, when he made his solemn Entry into it, and took his last, sad Farewell of it, not long before his Death. * *And when he was come near, he beheld the City, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy Day, the Things that belong unto thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine Eyes. For the Days shall come upon thee,*

* Luke xix. 41.

that thine Enemies shall cast a Trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every Side, and shall lay thee even with the Ground, and thy Children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one Stone upon another, because thou knowest not the Time of thy Visitation.

We find him foretelling the Destruction of the Temple: * *And as some spake of the Temple, how it was adorn'd with goodly Stones and Gifts, he said, As for these Things which ye behold, the Days will come, in the which there shall not be left one Stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. This was what Daniel also foretold: † After Threescore and two Weeks, shall the Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the People of the Prince, that shall come, shall destroy the City and Sanctuary.*

This Prophecy, every one knows, was exactly fulfilled in the thirty-seventh

* Luke xxi. 5. † Chap. ix. 26.

Year after Jesus's Death. We have a very minute Account of the Siege and Destruction of the City and Temple, by *Josephus*, an Historian of the greatest Credit, who was in the *Roman Camp* during the Siege*. He was a Jew, and never in the least suspected of favouring Christianity; and yet his Account of what happened before the Siege, during the Continuance of it, till the City was taken and destroy'd, so remarkably agrees with what Jesus foretold concerning it, that one would think sometimes, that the Historian had in View to shew how punctually the Prophecy was fulfilled.

These be the Days of Vengeance, said Jesus; and again, speaking of the same

* *Josephus de bello Judaico. Lib. VI. Cap. II.*
Καθέκασον μὴν ἔν' ἐπεξίεναι τὴν παρανομίαν αὐτῶν
ἀδύνατον, συνελόντα δὲ εἰπεῖν, μήτε πόλιν ἄλλην
τοιῦτα πεποδῖναι, μήτε γενεὰν ἐξ αἰῶνος γεγόνεναι
κακίας γονιμοτέραν.

Τὴν μὲν γε πόλιν ἀνέτρεψαν αὐτοὶ, Ῥωμαῖοι; δὴ
ἔκοντες, ἠνάγκαζαν ἐπιγραφῆναι σκύθῳ κα-
τορθώματι, καὶ μόνον ἐκ ἑλκυσαν ἐπὶ τῶν πᾶν βραδυ-
νὸν τὸ πῦρ. Ἀμέλει καιόμενον ἐκ τῆς ἄνω πόλεως ἀφ-
ραῦντες ἔτε ἡλγησαν ἔτε τδάκρυσαν, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα τὰ
τάθη παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις εὗρέθη.

Destruc-

Destruction of *Jerusalem*, he saith, * *There shall then be great Tribulation, such as was not from the Beginning of the World, to this Time, neither ever shall be.*

By *Josephus's* Account, this appears to have been fulfilled to the uttermost†. A Siege, so miserably destructive and calamitous, is no where to be paralleled; as it had this peculiar Circumstance attending it, that as many of the *Jews* dy'd by the Fury that rag'd among themselves against each other; during the Siege, as dy'd by the Hands of the *Romans*, their Besiegers. They murder'd each other in the Temple; they burned their own Stores of Provisions and Arms, which were very great; their Madness and Rage against one another was so extravagant, that their Historian declares, that it griev'd

* Luke xxi. 22.

† *Josephus Hist. de Bello Jud. Cap. 14.*

Οἱ δὲ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἐν τῇ δημοσίῳ θησαυροῦ τὰς νεκροὺς θάπτεον ἐκέλευον τὴν ὁσμὴν ἐφείροντες. ἔπειθ' ὡς ἐδίδηκον, ἀπο τῶν τειχῶν ἐρρίπτουν εἰς φαράγγας.

Περίων δὲ ταῦτας ὁ Τίτος ὡς ἐθεάσατο πεπλησμένους τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ βαθὺν ἰχῶρα μυδῶντων τὸν ὑπορρίοντα τῶν σωμάτων, σενάξας, καὶ τὰς χεῖρας ἀνατείνας, καταμαρτύρησε τὸν θεόν, ὡς ἐκείν τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ.

even

even their Besiegers to behold it ; and *Titus*, the General, is said to have lamented several Times, at the Sight of such dreadful Miseries. In a Word, as *St. Paul* speaks of them to the *Thessalonians*, * *They killed the Lord Jesus, and their own Prophets, and have persecuted us, to fill up their Sins alway, for the Wrath is come upon them them to the uttermost.* Thus was most eminently fulfilled this Prediction of Jesus : † *There shall be great Distress in the Land, and Wrath upon this People, and they shall fall by the Edge of the Sword.*

The Proof, arising from the eminent Fulfilling of this Prophecy, the *Jews*, who lived when Jesus was on Earth, wanted ; and we enjoy the Advantage of it : It is therefore to be thrown into the Scale, to balance the Advantage of sensible Evidence, which they had over our highly attested Historical Account of the Works and Doctrines of Jesus. Our Lord indeed foretold, that the Generation or Age, in which he liv'd, should not pass till all (which he foretold of the Destruction

* 1 Theff. ii. 16. † Luke xxi. 21.

of *Jerusalem*) should be fulfilled : But, though some very few might have liv'd to see it, yet, as it happened thirty-seven Years after Jesus's Death, those, who rejected him, must have been almost worn out.

But, however, they were at this Time judicially deserted by their God, and the Fulfilling this Prediction could have little Weight for their Conviction. They were now, as many as remained of them, to be carried away Captive into all Nations : And this brings us to consider another Proof which the *Jews*, who lived with Jesus, wanted, and of which we have the Benefit, to balance the Advantage of sensitive Evidence, which they had over our Gospel-history, *viz.* The Dispersion of the *Jews* into all the Countries of the Earth.

This we find foretold by Jesus : * *They shall be led away Captive into all Nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, that is, till the Gospel shall be*

* Luke xxi. 24.

fully

fully preached and promulgated to all Nations of the Earth, through which the *Jews* shall be dispersed; they shall continue banished from *Jerusalem*, where only they were allow'd, by their Law, to have the due Exercise of their Religion.

This Prediction exceeds all others, that ever were given by any of the Prophets, or by Jesus himself, inasmuch as this eminent Peculiarity hath constantly attended it, and will go on to attend it, *viz.* That, as there are *Jews* in every Nation upon Earth, so every Congregation, nay, every Man of them, in any Nation, is a standing daily Proof, to every Man of that Nation, of the wonderful and constant Completion of this Prophecy: Whilst every single *Jew* is a Monument and Proof to every Man, who will attend to it, of the most exemplary Punishment of that Nation, for their Renouncing their Messiah.

Take this Affair in its true Light: Here is a Nation the most remarkably and effectually distinguished and separated from other Nations of the World, by their Laws, both political and religious. They

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were by their Constitution obliged to marry with none but those of their own Nation; their very Food was to be order'd in so peculiar a Manner, that they could not so much as eat with one of another People or Country. A great Part of their Religion was essentially confined to *Jerusalem*, insomuch, that it was the highest Profanation of their Worship, to build an Altar, or offer Sacrifice, any where else.

Of this People, thus remarkably distinguished and separated from all the Nations of the Earth, confined even in the Exercise of their Religion to a particular District of Country; of them it is foretold by Jesus, *that they shall be carried Captive into all Nations*. This also their Prophet *Amos* foretold: **I will not utterly destroy the House of Jacob, saith the Lord; for lo, I will command, and will sift the House of Israel, among all Nations, like as Corn is sifted in a Sieve, &c.*

This hath accordingly been done in a Manner so remarkably peculiar, as never was in any Degree the Case of any other Nation

Nation upon Earth. By their being banished from the Place, where only they can have an Altar, and offer up those Sacrifices, which made a great Part of their Religion, and by the Want of a Priesthood, (the Tribe of *Levi* being lost in the Confusion of their Dispersions) the natural Consequence one would think should be, that their Religion should be at an End:

That, being so blended with all the Nations of the Earth, they should, in some Ages, with their Religion be lost among them. But, instead of this, intirely against what hath ever happened to any other Nation of the World, they continue in every Country a distinct Body of Men, and, by the Peculiarity of those Parts of their Religion which they can exercise every where, they remain, through more than sixteen Hundred Years, a People singularly mixed with, and at the same Time separated from all Mankind, and signally set up to the View of all the World.

By this wonderful Peculiarity of the Circumstances of this Nation, these following important Ends are manifestly

answer'd : *First*, This Prediction of Jesus, concerning their universal Dispersion, is daily fulfilled in the Eyes of all Mankind, through every Age, till the Christian Religion shall have its Course, through all the Nations of the Earth, that is, *till the Times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.*

Secondly, As this is a continual standing Proof to all the World of the Truth of the Christian Religion ; so, for a farther Confirmation of it, this Nation remains a Monument of God's Vengeance, to be pointed at, for their Rejecting the Messiah.

The Serving of these Ends was wonderfully provided for, by the Constitution of their Religion and Laws ; their being cut off from the Use of their Temple, their Priesthood, their Altar, their Sacrifices, proves to all the World, that their Religion is judicially abolished ; and for those Parts of it, which they go on to exercise in all Nations, among whom they are sited ; they are of such a peculiar Nature, as will effectually keep them separate from all Mankind through
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all Ages, while their Obstinacy shall last ; and are so many Signatures of God's Indignation against them eminently visible to all the Sons of Men.

These Proofs, which the *Jews*, who lived with Jesus, wanted, we have to throw into the Scale to balance their sensible Evidence, the Advantage which they had over our Gospel-History ; and we may now appeal to the common Sense of Mankind, whether there be that Difference, that is commonly imagined, between that Evidence which the *Jews* had, who lived when Jesus was on Earth, and that which we have at this Day.

To balance the Advantage which their sensible Evidence of the Facts and Doctrines of Jesus had over our History of them, (wrote by Eye and Ear Witnesses, infinitely better attested than ever History was) we have several great Advantages and powerful Evidences, which they wanted ; and the Question is, Whether, in their Circumstances, their Evidence was more fitted to convince them, than ours is to convince us ?

The universally prevailing Prepossessions and Prejudices of Education and Interest obstructed their Conviction, whereas both Education and Interest favour ours.

This Difference alone between our Cases called for all the Weight of sensible Evidence, to balance and get the better of the oppressive Load of those mighty Prejudices and Prepossessions of Education and Interest; and even it, we see, was in Fact insufficient, where an honest and faithful Exertion of their free Powers, assisted by God's Grace, was wanting: So that, even here, we seem to be upon a Level with them. But, if any Thing farther be necessary to make the Balance even, we have powerful Evidence which they wanted. We see Predictions fulfilled, which they could not see. We see surprisingly accomplished what Jesus foretold.

First, Concerning the swift Propagation of the Christian Religion through the then known World.

Secondly, Concerning the Rejection, and Miseries of the *Jewish* Nation, and the

the calamitous Siege and Destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*.

Thirdly, Concerning the strange Dispersion of the *Jews* into all Nations, where they remain through sixteen Centuries a standing Monument and Proof of Jesus's Mission to all People, *till the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*; till the Gospel hath had its Course through all the Nations of the Earth; as their Prophet *Amos* speaks: * *I have spread them abroad, as the four Winds, saith the Lord*: And again, † *They cried, but I would not hear, saith the Lord; but I scattered them with a Whirlwind, among all Nations whom they knew not*.

If more were wanting, other Considerations might be added, setting forth Advantages and Proofs, which we have, and they wanted, *viz.* That the *Jews*, who lived with Jesus, had no Opportunity of trying, by Experience, the Laws which Jesus delivered, whether they all tended to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind in general, and of e-

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* Ch ii. 6.

† Zech. vii. 14.

very one in Particular, in this World, and in that which is to come.

It requires a Length of Time, we know, effectually to prove the Usefulness and Expediency of Laws: The *Jews*, who lived with Jesus, had no Possibility of having Satisfaction in this Way, but had some Colour of Reason greatly to doubt, as to this Particular: We have the full Proof of fourteen Centuries, that the Laws of Christ have, as the Apostle affirms, *the Promise of the Life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.*

Not to insist upon the Advantage of having the Whole of the Doctrines and Miracles laid before us in one View, by the Gospels. Whereas they had only their Memories to serve them, of what they might chance to see or hear, at different Times and Places.

Upon the Whole, it may fairly and with full Evidence be concluded, that we, at this Day, have at least as good Proofs, as well fitted to convince us, as the *Jews*, who lived when Christ Jesus was on Earth, had to convince them; and consequently,

quently, that they, who now renounce him as their Messiah, would have renounced him, tho' they had lived in *Ju-dea* when he was upon Earth; and would renounce him now, tho' the very same Evidence were offered to them, which was given to the *Jews*.

The same evil Principles cause all to reject him, *viz.* an excessive Attachment to the Riches or sensual Pleasures, or to the Power and imaginary Grandeur of this World; to some Vice, or Passion, or Prejudice in the Power of our Wills to correct: * And the Unbelievers of these Days are as criminal in the Sight of God, as the *Jews*, who lived when Jesus was on Earth.

* There is a certain perverse Humanity in us which inwardly resists the Commission Divine, tho' ever so plainly revealed.

Lord Shaftsbury's Char. Vol. I.

S E C T.

S E C T. XXI.

*Containing a short State of the Deists Case,
being the Result of the former Sections.*

BY what hath been set forth concerning the true Nature of Christian Faith, the Case of the Deists and of all Unbelievers, to whom the Christian Religion with its Evidences, is fairly proposed, is reduced to this short Issue: They either acknowledge, that they are hinder'd to yield their Assent to Jesus Christ's being the Messias, by some vicious Dispositions or Habits, or they do not acknowledge it. If they do acknowledge that they are influenced to withhold their Assent, thro' any Fault of their Wills or Affections, the Reforming of which is in their Power: If, thro' the Practice of any Vice, or the Want of any Virtue, they are Infidels, there can be no Doubt, but that they will, with the greatest Justice, be liable to the Doom pronounced against Unbelievers ;

believers; and there is the strongest Probability, from the Nature of the Thing, that there never was a Person, who rejected the Christian Religion as an Imposture, where this was not the Case.

If any Man is so vain, as to maintain, that he is not, and hath not been influenced in his Reasonings, by any vicious Habit, Disposition or Principle: Even this, insisted on, will be a Proof, equal to an hundred Arguments, that he is strongly under the Influence of one vicious Habit, and that, one of very pernicious and desperate Efficacy, namely, Pride.

We have formerly shewn, that one vicious Habit, or Principle, may render a Man so unfit to judge of any divine Truth, as that it may cause him to reject a Revelation from God; and, then, there can be no Doubt, but that he may be justly liable to the Penalty denounced against Infidels.

But, here, it may be objected, that, upon these Principles, no Man is, or can be, fit to judge of the Truth of the Christian Religion, because no Man can be supposed

posed quite free from the Influence of some evil Habit or Principle.

To this I answer: That it is, by no Means, here maintained, that any evil Habit, or vicious Principle, will necessarily cause any Man to reject a Revelation from God. We only affirm, that it naturally hath that Tendency, and may very easily cause him to renounce a Religion from God as an Imposture. And every Unbeliever in Christ runs a terrible Hazard that this may be his Case.

Beyond all Doubt it is, that a Man, under some Degree of Influence from several evil Habits, may receive a divine Revelation, and act agreeably to its Commands, especially if he have in him a Love for Truth and Virtue, and if he properly concur with the divine Assistance operating on his Soul.

But what we maintain, is, that the Influence of one evil Principle may very easily make a Man an Infidel; and every one, who renounceth the pure, the reasonable, and righteous Commands of Christ,

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runs a dreadful Risque (to no Purpose) that he has acted under this Influence.

And herein eminently appeareth, in the strongest Light, the mighty Difference there is between the Christian Freethinker, and the Man who renounceth the blessed Jesus, as an Impostor.

He who hath properly examined the Proofs which evince the Christian Religion to be of divine Original, and receiveth it as from God, runs no Hazard. He looks upon Jesus Christ, as a Teacher sent from God, and, according to his Laws, he sincerely endeavours to lead a godly, righteous, and a sober Life. He lives under the delightful Influence of a cheerful Hope, that he hath received from God a Cure for the Defects and Imperfections of his corrupt Nature, and, relying on the Mercy of his Creator thro' Jesus Christ, he dies, with the comfortable Expectation and lively Hope, that he shall, in God's good Time, be admitted to a State of perfect Happiness, in a better World.

But how vastly different from this is the Case of that Person, who, under the
Influence

Influence of any one faulty Principle, rejects the Christian Religion as an Imposture? To what a dreadful Hazard doth he expose himself for nothing, for no real Advantage? Or rather, we may truly say, he runs this terrible Risque, for what is worse than nothing. If the Christian Religion be from God, his melancholy Doom is then decreed: The blessed Jesus hath already pronounced it: *He that believeth not, shall be damned.*

But what doth he get, even in this World, by the Choice which he maketh? What is the mighty Advantage which he secureth? Why, the sensual Deist gets Nothing but, perhaps, a little more Quiet, for a short Time, in the mischievous Indulgence of his Appetites, which, we say, is worse than Nothing, because it is the real Misery of his Nature, covered over with a thin delusive Disguise of Pleasure; and the more moral Deist gets nothing, but the absurd Pleasure, arising from setting up for more Sagacity, more Strength of Mind, and more Knowledge, than he will allow other Men to have. And this
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is the Pride of the wretched Pittance of human Understanding, as pernicious a Principle as any among the many that mislead us: And this Pleasure, we say, as it is vicious, is worse than Nothing.

Here, then, upon the Whole we see, that there are two Sorts or Degrees of Evidence in this Case, which offer themselves to the Deist's Judgment, and the Question is, Which he shall prefer? One is that, which ariseth from the Proofs, that Jesus was a Teacher sent from God: The other is the Ground of that Persuasion which any Deist may have in his own Mind, that he is not, and hath not been influenced, in his Rejecting the Christian Religion, by any vicious Habit, or any of the evil Principles of corrupt Nature.

The Evidence arising from the Proofs of the Truth of the Christian Religion, we have seen, is very high and strong: That which a Man can have to prove that he is not influenced, in his Rejecting the other Evidence, by any vicious Principle, is very low, and vastly uncertain, and next to none.

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If he accepts of the higher Degree of Evidence, which by the Laws of his Nature, and upon the Principles of common Sense, he is bound to do, he runs no Hazard: He lives chearfully and virtuously, and dies in Hope, and without fearful Apprehensions: If he goes on the low Degree of Probability, he runs the most desperate Hazard, that the Doom pronounced against Unbelievers may be his; he lives without Hope, and dies in Horror: And, if Jesus was a Teacher sent from God, his Lot will be Lamentation, and Mourning, and Woe, to all Eternity.

And now I beg Leave, in a few Words, to intreat all ingenuous Deists, fairly and impartially to weigh the Righteousness and Reasonableness of the Terms upon which, as we have shewn from the Scriptures, they may become true Christians, and consequently that nothing but Unrighteousness and Unreasonableness can hinder them to profess themselves Disciples of Jesus: To practise all his moral Precepts, and examine with Industry and Impartiality

ality, the other Evidences of his being sent from God.

Let me beseech them, as they tender their own Happiness, the Happiness of all Mankind, and the Pleasing of the Almighty and All-knowing God, to set themselves, honestly and with Resolution, to do what, in this great Affair, their Reason must tell them they are bound, by all the strongest Ties of Right and Truth, as reasonable Men, to do.

The Religion, which Jesus gave to the World, offers itself to your full and most effectual Examination. The Question before you, is, Whether Jesus was sent from God, or no?

The Proofs, which evince his Mission, lie (as we have seen) principally under these Heads, *viz.* The Miracles that he wrought, the pure and perfect Doctrines that he taught.

The Prophecies which he foretold which have been accomplished, the Prophecies foretold of him which he fulfilled, and the Raising himself from the Dead.

The Purity and Perfection of the Morality of any Religion must, among other Arguments, be the Principal, whereby its Coming from God must be evinced. In this Regard, the Christian Religion calls upon you, with the strongest Claim, impartially and with Industry, to examine its Credentials.

The Reason and Nature of the Thing dictates to you the proper Method, in which you are to proceed in bringing it to Trial, namely, by faithfully practising all the moral Precepts of it: In that only proper Manner making the Experiment, whether they all tend to the Perfecting of human Nature, and the Promoting the Happiness of Mankind in General, and of every Individual in Particular, in this Life, and in that which is to succeed the present.

This, as it is the Way in which the Gospel declares every Revelation should be examined, so we have shewn, that, from the Reason and Nature of the Thing, it is the only Method that can properly enable

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us to judge impartially, of any Truth whatsoever, that concerns Morality.

It hath plainly appeared, that the Setting right the Heart, the Affections and Passions, for the Things of this World, is the proper Way of setting our Understandings right, of rendering them capable of properly judging whether any Religion come from God, or no. And indeed, while they are wrong, it is as impossible, that we should be proper Judges, whether a Religion be right, as it is to determine whether a Line be a strait one, by a Rule that is crooked.

If then you are reasonable Men, and have any Regard to Right and Truth, your own Happiness and the Happiness of Mankind, both here, and in the expected future State, proceed honestly in this Method of examining the Christian Religion, the only Procedure, that can be agreeable to Right and Truth.

If you are once free from vicious Attachments and Prejudices, and sincerely practise Morality, you will then judge

with Authority, of the other Evidences of the Christian Religion ; using all proper Industry that is in your Power, and improving all the Opportunities and Advantages, which your Creator gives you ; always remembering, that God never intended to give Men Evidence of the great Truths of Religion, equal to sensitive or Mathematical Certainty, sufficient to force the Assent of the Mind, inasmuch as that would tend to the Destroying the Morality of human Actions, by taking away or lessening the Liberty of human Will.

That, from the Condition of our Nature in this Life, as reasonable Men, you are bound, upon the Principles of common Sense, in all Affairs of Moment, to act upon the greatest Probability and Credibility, that we can discover in every Case: And as, with Regard to the most important Affairs of this World, that Man would be pronounced mad, who should refuse to act in them, till he should get absolute Certainty concerning them; so that Man will be found to act madly and
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without common Sense, who, in Relation to the momentous Affairs of a future State, shall refuse to act agreeably to the strongest Probability and Credibility, and order all his Actions suitably to it.

S E C T. XXII.

That no Man can have true Christian Faith, without Freedom in Thought and Action; and that true Freethinking, and true Christian Faith, as it is the Act of the Mind, are evidently one and the same Thing.

HAVING seen the true Nature of Christian Faith, it is obvious to remark on the Absurdity of those false Notions of it, which universally prevail among those of all Denominations, who do not receive the Christian Religion as a Revelation from God; as first, that it requires a blind implicit Belief, without or against Reason. Or what is little better, that it demands an easy, forward Credulity, ready to receive its Dictates upon Trust, as coming from God, without strictly examining its Credentials. Hence it is become an Error exceedingly prevailing, propagated even among many, who have not intirely

intirely renounced the Christian Religion, *that Christian Faith is not groundd in the best Reason*: That, in order to a Man's being a good Believer, he must depart, in a good Measure, from the free and effectual Use of his intellectual Faculties: And, in a Word, that Faith and good Sense are Things very different, if not incompatible, and that the same Person cannot use true Freedom of Thought, and be a Believer in Jesus Christ as sent from God.

The groundless Absurdity of these Errors very plainly appears, from what hath been proved in the foregoing Sections, in which it hath been shewn, that the Christian Dispensation not only alloweth, but strictly commandeth the full and free Use of our Reason, in all Things relating to Religion.

Of this Sort are those known before-mentioned Passages, which command us to prove all Things, and to hold fast that which is good; to try the Spirits whether they be of God, and, Why even of yourselves, (said Jesus) judge ye not what is right? As the distinguished Praise of the

Bereans, is, that they were noble, free, and generous, in their Enquiries, examining, with Candor, Impartiality, and Industry, into the Grounds and Evidences of the Christian Religion.

Nor is it only commanded in the Christian Dispensation, we have also shewn, that it is absolutely necessary, grounded in the Nature of Things, inasmuch that the Subject of this Section is really a Corollary, that follows from the former.

We have shewn, that in order to our being capable of judging properly, of any divine or moral Truth whatsoever, it is absolutely necessary, that our intellectual Faculties, our Understandings and Free-wills, be not under any strong Clog, or Tie, of any prejudiced Attachment to the sensual Pleasures, the Riches or Grandeur of this World; and, indeed, that the fullest, the freest, the justest and most righteous Use of our Understandings and Liberty of Choice, be not hindered by any blind or irrational Impediment whatsoever.

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As this hath been proved from the Reason and Nature of Things, from the Scriptures, and from Fact and Experience, it necessarily follows, that no Man can have true Christian Faith, without the truest Freedom in Thought and Action.

But, in order to put this Matter in a plainer Light, it will be necessary to settle more particularly, what is the true Notion of true Freedom, in Thinking and Acting. And first, as to Thinking freely: That Man will be allowed, by all, to think with the truest Freedom whose Understanding, in the active Pursuit of Truth, is not clogg'd, byass'd, or, in any Sort, restrain'd by any Prejudice or Prepossession whatsoever: But as the Discovery of Truth, and the Acting agreeably to it, is his only Aim, so he pursues it, by getting the justest Notions he can, by forming the best Judgments of, and the most regular Conclusions from them, that Industry and Honesty can lead him to.

This will, I believe, be allowed to be a fair Description of true Freethinking, by
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any, who, with the least Justice, ever pretended to that Character.

First then, there can be no Freethinking without Industry and an active Exertion of Thought, in the Pursuit of Truth. Thinking can never be free, while it is under any Clog or Restraint; Sloth, Inattention, and Idleness, is the greatest Impediment that can hang upon Thinking; it must therefore be called Thoughtlessness, or Stupidity, but it can never pretend to the Honour of Freethinking. Hence also it follows, that it cannot be Freethinking, to assume a Licence of judging of the most important Matters, without due Information, and a fair impartial Balancing of what can be said on both Sides of any Question. For this is so far from Freethinking, in Relation to any Point, that it is manifestly the Declining of all Thought about it.

Secondly; In the same Manner, it can never be Freethinking, to assume a Licence of confounding, instead of distinguishing, the Nature of Right and Wrong, Truth and Falshood. For Thinking, and
Judging,

Judging, is properly the pointing out and ascertaining the small Differences of Things: A Licence, therefore, at Will, to call Good, Evil, and Evil, Good; to overturn from its Foundations all Knowledge, by maintaining, that there are not, in the Nature of Things, any Differences essential between Vice and Virtue, but what Custom, or the Law of the Land, hath made; or that there is no certain Mark, whereby Truth may be distinguished from Falshood: This is Leaving no Room for Thought, whose Office is nicely to distinguish; it is therefore the Reverse of Thinking, especially of Thinking freely.

In the third Place, what we observed before of Sloth, is evidently true of all Vice whatsoever: There are no greater Impediments to Thinking freely, nothing chains or shackles Thought more, than any Lust or Passion, any excessive Attachment to sensual Pleasure, to the Riches or Grandeur of this World. The Truth is, either our Understandings must govern our Lusts and Passions, or they must govern

vern our Understandings. If this last be the Case, if we are under the Direction of any Vice, we are then so far from being Freethinkers, that our intellectual Faculties, with the whole Man, are engaged in the vilest and basest Slavery, that we can have any Notion of. We are then Slaves to our Servants, for all our Appetites and Inclinations for the Things of this World were made to be our Servants, to be in absolute Subjection to our intelligent Power; and excellent Servants they are, while they are well governed; they carry on our own Happiness and the Designs of Providence, with the greatest Efficacy and Success. For, whilst this is the Case, the Order of Nature is preserved, and all Things go right, and we may then be truly Freethinkers. But if any of these rebel; if it gets the Reins, and we poorly follow and are led by it, there is then, while this State continues, an End to the Monarchy of Reason; the Rebel Slave hath deposed his Monarch, and usurped his Throne, and sets him to do his basest Work and vilest Drudgery.

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Then, as if the Sun should depart from his Place, or lose at once his Light and Power over this World, and opaque Matter get the better of him, not more pernicious would this Confusion thus produced be to the World, than the Overturning the Order of Nature in us is destructive of the Man.

In a Word, our Appetites and Passions are unintelligent and blind, and incline to their respective Objects without any just Bounds or Distinctions. If, therefore, we take any one of them, or more, to guide us, we tie ourselves to a blind Guide, we can hope for nothing, but endless Confusion and Error; at least, we can never be said to follow any Thing freely, not even our blind Guide; nor can we, in such Case, have less Pretensions to any Thing than to the following Truth freely, or to Thinking freely.

But we have said, that no Man can have true Christian Faith, without true Freedom in Action, as well as Thinking: Let us then settle, what is properly to be understood by true Freedom in Action.

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He only, then, will be allow'd to act freely, who, guided by Reason, pursues without Impediment those Things that are the true Happiness of his Nature, and avoids those, that must make him unhappy.

A Licence, therefore, of doing every Thing, tho' it be the Destroying of a Man's own Happiness, and the Happiness of all around him, can never be deemed true Liberty. It may be Madness, Misery and Destruction, but it never can be called Freedom.

True Liberty! the inestimable Blessing, Liberty, comprehends all that enables us to pursue and to secure our true Happiness. The glorious Liberty, even of Angels, must consist in the utmost Freedom, from all Impediment, to pursue and to secure all that will truly make them happy, and to avoid the contrary; nay, the Liberty of God himself must be a perfect Freedom to chuse, in every Case, what is fittest, wisest, and best. A Licence, therefore, of doing every Thing, may be Libertinism

bertinism or Licentiousness, but it must be the Reverse of true Liberty.

Nor will he ever be allowed, by common Sense, to act freely, who is ty'd down, by any Vice whatsoever, to chuse and to pursue those Things, which must make him, and those he has to do with, unhappy. This is no other, than the Freedom of a Ship, whose Helm is lash'd, turned out to Sea without a Pilot, to be driven upon Rocks and Sands, as the Violence of the Winds and Waves protrudes her.

In a Word, he is ty'd to a blind Guide, and, poorly following that Guide, he is so far from acting freely, that, in it, he obeys the vilest Commands of his Servant and his Slave.

This was ever the Sense of the antient Heathen. *Xenophon*, in his fifth Book of Things memorable, introduces *Socrates* speaking to this Point. Discourfing of the Vicious, he saith, that they are Slaves to Masters exceedingly severe, some to Luxury, some to Lust, some to Drunkenness, some to foolish and destructive Ambition,

bition, which exercise the severest Tyranny, on those over whom they have got the Ascendant.

Cicero, in his Book of Paradoxes, delivers the same Doctrine, as allowed and taught by the Antients. It is the Sentiment (saith he) of the wisest of Men, that none but the Virtuous are free. For what is Freedom? It is the Power of living according to the Dictates of your own Judgment. And who lives as he would, but he who follows what is right, and rejoices in his Duty?

He, who saith Nothing, doth Nothing, and thinks Nothing, but what is unconstrained and free. All, whose Resolutions and Actions proceed from, and depend upon himself alone. Nor has any Thing whatsoever a Power over him, superior to that of his own Will, and the Judgment of his Understanding. And, a little after, he adds: Therefore all the Vicious are Slaves. For if Servitude be the Subjection of a broken abject Mind, that hath no Power over itself, Who will deny, that all the Inconstant, all that are under the
Power

Power of Appetite, are Slaves. Who, therefore, saith *Horace*, may be called free? *Quisnam igitur liber?* He answers, That the wise Man is truly free; *sibi qui imperiosus*; he who hath the Power of governing himself, & *respondere Cupidinis fortis*: He who hath Strength of Mind, Resolution and Constancy, sufficient to resist and direct his Affections and Appetites. Here is the only true Notion of true Freedom in Action, according to a Heathen, a Poet, and an Epicurean.

These may suffice, as a few Instances among very many, to be found in the Writings of the antient Moralists, who constantly affirm, that he, who is led by his Appetites, is a Slave, and that he only, who governs them, can be allowed to be free.

But it is worth While to take Notice of the elegant Light, in which *Peter* the Apostle hath put those, who promise Mankind Liberty, by following and being led by every Appetite: *While they promise them Liberty, they themselves are the Servants of Corruption.*

The obvious Meaning of these Words is, that he is the Servant of Corruption, who is under the Power of what corrupts, and must destroy, his Being, or Well-being.

Corruption, in a natural Sense, is that which destroys the Nature of any Thing ; and Corruption, in a moral Sense, is nothing else but moral Evil, that is, all that which, when chosen or practised, destroys human Nature, or the Happiness of it. They, therefore, who are Servants to Corruption, have so far lost their natural Liberty, that they are not Masters of themselves ; they do not govern their own Actions, but they are governed, and intirely under the Power of moral Evil, of that which corrupts and destroys the Happiness of our Natures.

In a Word, he, that is a Servant of Corruption, is a Slave to Falshood and Error in his Understanding, and to all that is pernicious and destructive in Practice ; which is prohibited and forbid us by our gracious God, for this Reason, because it is Corruption, it is that which corrupts
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and destroys the Happiness of our Natures.

A Man, that hath lost his Liberty, is, at best, in a wretched State; but he that is a Slave to Corruption, to what corrupts and destroys his Nature, or the Happiness of it, he is a Slave indeed, emphatically a Slave! A Slave to all that is bad, to Error, Falshood, and Prejudice in his Understanding, and to all that is hurtful in Practice and Action.

Having fairly stated what we are to understand by true Freedom in Thinking and Acting, the Point which is the Subject of this Chapter may be easily determined, *viz.* Whether a Man can have compleat Christian Faith without the true Freedom in Thinking and Acting?

We have already shewn, that one vicious Habit, Prejudice, or Prepossession, may render us incapable of judging of any moral Truth, and may cause us to reject a Revelation from God.

We have also shewn, that he only hath true Christian Faith, who hath such a Persuasion of Mind, that Jesus Christ

was sent from God, as effectually engageth him, according to Christ's Commands, to allow and indulge himself in no one known sinful Habit whatsoever.

It follows, therefore, necessarily, that he only can have true Christian Faith, who hath this true Freedom in Thinking and Acting, which we have set forth.

This, we see, is plain of Christian Faith considered objectively (to speak in the Language of the Schools) we can never attain to the Persuasion that Jesus Christ was sent from God, without true Freedom in Thinking and Acting.

But, if we consider Faith (to speak in the same Language) in the formal Notion of it, barely as it is the Act or Employment of the Mind, we shall find Freethinking and true Christian Faith to be evidently one and the same Thing. For what is Freethinking, but a just and righteous Use of our intelligent and free Powers contemplating any Subject of Importance? And what is the Gospel-Faith, but the most just and righteous Use of the same intelligent and free Powers employ-
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ed on the Subject of divine Revelation:
And what was this, but true Freethinking
concerning it, and his Acting agreeably to
the Persuasion of his Mind?

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S E C T. XXIII.

Shewing that Infidelity took its Rise from Rome, and hath been propagated from thence to us; and that our Deists, however contrary to their Intentions, carry on, and greatly forward the Interests and Designs of Popery.

THAT the monstrous Errors, in Principle and Practice, that have been introduced into the Christian Religion, have been one great Source and Occasion of Infidelity, unprejudiced Reason will easily acknowledge: And, if this be made appear, all, except the Members of Rome, will allow, that, as they have been the great Corrupters of the Christian Religion, making it an unrighteous, and a meer worldly Scheme (such as rational and thinking Men could never assent to, as coming from the just and righteous God) they must have given the first Rise to Infidelity; and that it hath been propagated
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among us by them, will appear from some Facts, that are pretty well known.

All will allow, that among the several Pretensions, which have been made to Revelation, nothing can direct Men to approve what comes from God, and to reject what is the Invention of Men, but their own Reason, with the ordinary Assistance of God's Spirit. Either they are not Creatures capable of Religion, or of distinguishing false Religions from the true, or their own Reason, with the Help of God, must be the Touchstone that must distinguish what is Sterling, from what is of base Alloy: And this, as we have often observed, the Scriptures not only allow, but command. It is commanded that *we try the Spirits whether they be of God; and that we prove all Things, and hold fast that which is good.*

Reason then, unprejudiced Reason, with the Help of God's Grace, must determine for every Man, whether this, or that Religion, hath God for its Author or not. But as the due Exercise of this Power, in all Matters of Importance, and above all

in the Affair of Religion, calls for much Caution, Industry, and Honesty ; and, as Mankind are too often defective in all these Particulars, so many are exceedingly apt to abuse this Right of judging for themselves. They are apt to judge hastily, without giving themselves the Trouble of due Examination and Enquiry. They take Things in the Gross, and pronounce rashly, and won't distinguish the Thing, from the Abuse of the Thing, or from the Persons that abuse it, especially when Interest, Prejudice, or Passion urge them to act in this Manner ; and these never fail to be at Hand to drive them on.

This being the Case, when Men perceived Falshood and Inconsistency mixed up in the Christian Religion, and found at the same Time, that their favourite Vices were condemned by it, they were but too much inclined to pronounce of it in the Gross, and at once condemn the Whole, as the Invention of Men. From the Nature of Things it could not be otherwise. When Mankind heard them maintain as a Doctrine of Christ, that good Works
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may be bought, and the Righteousness of one Man, be assigned to another for Money, and that Pardons, or Indulgencies for Sins, may be purchased for Gold: What could they think of such a Religion, but that it was encouraging of Sin, and could not have God for its Author? What could Mankind think, when they saw Doctrines and Practices maintained as Christian, that are intirely calculated, for the Accumulating of worldly Riches, and the Acquiring of temporal Power and Grandeur; such as are those of Purgatory, Works of Supererogation, of Indulgencies for Sin, the Power of deposing Princes, absolving Subjects from their Allegiance, and the Disposing of Kingdoms at the Will of the Pope? What must these Things cause the Generality of Mankind (who are rash and prejudiced Judges) to think of Christianity, when they are, by their Vices, sufficiently disposed to lay hold of any Handle against it? Will they not be forward to pronounce it all, to be a meer worldly Scheme, calculated for the Riches, the Power, the Grandeur and Luxury of this

this World, for the enriching and aggrandizing a particular Set of Men?

Are they not naturally thus led to renounce it, as not coming from God, and drawn insensibly into Infidelity, to the *Denying the Lord that bought them*? What could Men think, when they saw the great Professors and Teachers of Christianity reversing the express Commands of Christ, by Ordinances and Decrees of Popes and Councils! Have they not notoriously done this, in the Particulars of Prayers in an unknown Tongue; in withholding the sacred Scriptures from the People; in withholding the Cup in the Eucharist from the Laity, and in the Worship of Saints and Angels, dead Men and Women, Stocks and Stones?

Is it possible, that Men should be persuaded, that the Gospel came from God, and at the same Time, that they should make Laws, in direct Opposition and Contradiction to that Gospel? Is it possible they should believe it to contain the Laws of God, and that they should at the same Time, by formal Establishments of their own,

own, reverse and disannul those Laws, as they have done? That they should overturn even the Morality of it, as the Jesuits have notoriously done in their Writings: This hath been fully, and in the clearest Manner, demonstrated, by the famous Monsieur *Pascal* in his Provincial Letters; and, of late, by the excellent *Berthier*, in his admirable Parallel between the Doctrines of the Pagans and Jesuits.

What must the World, looking on, conclude, when they saw these Things? But that these great Professors could have no Persuasion that the Christian Religion came from God: And, when the Teachers manifestly shew'd themselves to be of that Opinion, those, who were taught, must soon come into the same Sentiments.

Thus we have shewn from the Nature of Things, that Infidelity took its Rise from the dreadful Abuses, Corruptions and Absurdities, which the Church of *Rome* introduced into the Christian Religion, and, thus, we charge her with the greatest Justice, as the fruitful Parent of Infidelity: That it hath been propagated
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with great Industry by them among us, is grounded upon Facts.

The famous *Vanini*, when he was taken at *Tbolouse* in *France*, confessed publickly, as he was about to die, that he had left *Naples*, his native Country, in Company with eleven Companions (in Opposition probably to the twelve Apostles) with a regular formed Design of propagating Infidelity thro' all the Kingdoms of *Europe*. What became of his Companions, doth not so well appear; but, if we may judge of their Success in sowing the Seed, by the plentiful Harvest that hath ensued, they were not disappointed of their Hopes. This happened in the Reign of King *James* the First, not long after the Reformation had been settled, and probably might be designed as a Battery against it. What Armies of Emissaries they have constantly sent among us from their Seminaries abroad, has long been notorious. Our Popish Youth are there trained up in Convents for these Purposes, and, at the Command of their Superiors, they come among us, under an infinite Variety of Shapes

Shapes and Disguises, and, by Writing and Conversing, propagate the most desperate Opinions, of which they find the Minds of our People most susceptible.

Thus they are allowed to have been the Authors of most of the numberless Sects which sprang up, during the Usurpation of *Cromwell*; and of the Infidelity which took Place upon the Restoration. *Toland* is affirmed to have been the Son of an *Irish* Priest, and *Tindal* was at least reconciled to the Church of *Rome* in the Reign of King *James* the Second.

In his Book called *Christianity as old as the Creation*, he affirms that Papists are the only consistent Christians, and represents Protestants, in more Places than one, as inconsistent in their Principles and Doctrines; and maintains, that we must be necessarily either Deists or Papists.

In a Word, it is manifestly the Interest and Endeavour of the Church of *Rome* to weaken, distract, and confound us, by all the Ways they can.

In the Scale of Religion, their Superstition is one Extreme, and Infidelity the other;

other; and since we left them and renounced their Superstition (as they well know, how apt Mankind is to run from one Extreme to another) manifest it is, that they have endeavoured, all they can, to drive us, as far as they may, into Infidelity, that there may be the greater Probability of our returning to their Superstition.

And, indeed, whoever will carefully examine these Matters, will find, that Popery and Infidelity are in Reality very nearly allied, and of the very same Stock and Family. That as we have shewn, that Popery hath produced, and largely propagated Infidelity; so we shall find, that Infidelity must in all Probability produce Popery. A thinking and a learned Papist, who abets and maintains the Contradictions of the Church of *Rome* to Christ's Laws, must in all Probability be an Infidel at Heart; and what is more natural, than that Unbelievers of all Sorts should, as the Protestant Religion loses Ground, be reconciled, like *Tindal*, to
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that Religion, which is really the Christian reversed and overturned.

And as for all the Vicious and the Dissolute, who are very numerous, and list themselves under the Banner of Deism, they must of Course, from their Interest, be very favourably inclined to a Religion, which is peculiarly calculated for, and favourable to the Wicked, as Mr. *Pascall* and *Berthier* (both Members of the Church of *Rome*) have fully demonstrated, and is evident in the Doctrines of Works of Supererogation, Indulgencies, Pardons and unconditional Absolution. This is the plain State of our Case, and these the direct and terrible Tendencies of the Infidelity, that hath taken Place among us.

As therefore there are, no Doubt, Numbers of Deists among us, who are real Lovers of their Country, and Abhorrrers of Popery, as they would take Care of their native Land, and defend it from civil and religious Tyranny, they are to be called upon, in the most earnest and interesting Manner, to look well about them, and beware that they do not continue, as they have

have been, the Fools and Dupes of *Rome*, and of Jesuits!

That they do not throw back their once happy Country, and their Posterity, into the Chains of Popery and blind Superstition, which too manifestly gains Ground in *Europe*, and even in *England*. When Spiritual Tyranny hath once taken Place, arbitrary Power and Tyranny in the State will soon follow.

The Reformation, while supported, effectually secures us against all religious Tyranny, and is one great Security of our civil Liberties. Let us keep out Popery with all the Power of Watchfulness, Caution, and Industry, as the only true Ground, whereon we can have Hope of true Freedom in Thinking and Acting in our civil and religious Rights: But, then, there is the same Necessity, that we do not propagate or countenance Infidelity, for otherwise Popery will break in upon us, and that, in all Probability, by swift Advances.



F I N I S.